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TORN SAILS

A Tale of a Welsh Village

BY ALLEN RAINE
AUTHOR OF MIFANWY, A WELSH SINGER

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The Author has considered it advisable slightly to alter the spelling of some of the Welsh words, to suit the pronunciation of the English language.

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D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
1898

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	MWNTSEISON	1
II.	HUGH MORGAN	17
III.	MARI "VONE"	36
IV.	GWEN'S "BIDDING"	52
V.	TRAETH-Y-DARAN	71
VI.	CHANGES	96
VII.	A WEDDING CALL	112
VIII.	CONFIDENCES	129
IX.	GWEN'S REBELLION	141
X.	HUGH'S SUSPICIONS	162
XI.	THE STORM	185
XII.	UNREST	207
XIII.	DOUBTS AND FEARS	222
XIV.	THE MILL	240
XV.	TORN SAILS	261
XVI.	PEACE	276
XVII.	THE MILL IN THE MOONLIGHT	288

TORN SAILS.

"Caraf ei morfa, a'i mynyddedd,
A'i gwilain gwynion, a'i gwymp wreigèdd."
—*Hab Owain.*

"I love her golden shores, her mountains bare,
Her snow-white seagulls, and her maidens fair."
—*Trans.*

CHAPTER I.

MWNTSEISON.

BETWEEN two rugged hills, which rose abruptly from the clear, green waters of Cardigan Bay, the Gwendraeth, a noisy little river, found its way from the moors above to the sands which formed the entrance from the sea to the village of Mwntseison.

In the narrow valley, or "cwm," through which the fussy little streamlet ran, the whole village lay. It looked like nothing more than a cluster of white shells left by the storm in a chink of the rocks, the cottages being perched in the most irregular confusion wherever sufficient space could be found between the rocky knolls for a house and garden.

The stream running through the centre of

the village was an object of interest and attraction to the whole community, being the common rendezvous for all sorts of domestic operations. On its banks the household washing was carried on, fires being lighted here and there, on which the water was boiled in large brass pans. There was much chattering and laughter, varied sometimes by hymn singing in chorus, so that "washing day" at Mwntseison was a holiday rather than a day of toil.

Here Nance Owen rinsed the laver-weeds * preparatory to boiling them down into that questionable delicacy known as "laver-bread."

Here the sheep from the moors above were washed once a year with much calling and shouting and barking of dogs. The barefooted boys and girls paddled and sailed their boats in its clear waters in the summer evenings; and here, when the storms of winter made the little harbour unsafe, the fishing-boats were hauled up together; here, too, the nets were washed; and here every day the willow baskets full of vegetables were brought down to be rinsed before they were flung into the boiling crock of water and oatmeal, which hung from every chimney at the hour of noon, vegetables being the chief ingredients in the appetising "cawl" that spread its aroma through the whole village.

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* The thin dark green seaweed, known to the learned as *ulva latissima*. When boiled down, it is mixed with oatmeal, and fried in butter.

A strong wooden bridge with an iron rail spanned the narrow river, but was seldom used except in winter, a few broad stepping-stones making a more natural mode of communication between the two sides of the valley.

There was nothing like a street in Mwntseison, a rocky, stony road alone passing through it down to the shore, in an independent sort of way, as if disclaiming any connection with the cottages following its course, and, where possible, rather clinging to its sides. Most of the houses were straw thatched; a few had slated roofs, and they looked awkward and bare in their uncongenial attire. The fierce storms, however, which rushed up that narrow cwm in the winter months soon softened any look of rawness which clung to such an innovation as a slate roof!

At the end of the village nearest the sea, and not far from the top of the cliff, stood a large, wooden building, which seemed to attract much of the energy and interest of the place, for in and out of its wide-open doors there was always somebody passing. Within its boarded walls was carried on the thriving business of sail-making, which gave employment and comfort to almost every household in the village. Hard by, in a cleft of the great hillside, stood the house of the master, Hugh Morgan, "Mishteer," as he was called, for he was the owner of more than half of Mwntseison.

In Wales the landlord is still called "Master," and about the term hangs, in spite of modern

and radical suggestions, a flavour of the old affection which once existed between landlord and tenant.

There was nothing in the house to distinguish it from the other cottages, except that it was a little larger, and moreover boasted of a second floor, over the two windows of which the brown thatch curved its comfortable mantle.

Its front was well sheltered from the sea wind by a bank of the cliff, covered with sea pinks and yellow trefoil. The sun shone full upon its white-washed walls, and in the "cwrt," or front garden, grew two splendid bushes of hydrangia, the pride of the village.

Inside, in the spacious old "pen-isha," or living-room, the brown rafters hung low in the dim light, for the window was small, and deedly set in the thick walls. The chimney was of the old-fashioned sort, known as "lwfwr," and encircled within its wattled sides a large portion of the kitchen. Under its shade there was room for the small round table, the settle, and the cosy bee-hive or lip chair. Along the front of its bulging brow ran a shelf, ranged upon which stood various articles of pewter, copper, and brass, glittering with all the brilliancy that Madlen, the maid's, strong arm could give them. She was proud of her long service under the Mishteer, of the pre-eminence which he held over the rest of the villagers; she was proud of her well-scrubbed tables and chairs, and her invariably clean and cheerful hearth; but above all

things, she was proud of that shelf with its shining company of "household gods." Indeed, some of the articles ranged upon it would have roused the enthusiasm of a modern collector of curios. The quaint, old brass bowl, with its curious inscription, still faintly visible in spite of Madlen's vigorous rubbing, a rugged old flagon of pewter, bearing the same inscription, not to speak of the quaintly-shaped copper pans, and a regiment of tall, brass candlesticks. When questioned as to the manner in which he had become possessed of such a goodly array, Hugh Morgan was wont to say carelessly, "Oh! I only know they were my grandmother's, and I have heard her say they were *her* grandmother's." He did not add, as he might have done, that she had also told him that in long past days, the eldest son of the family was always christened from that bowl, for he rather despised and disliked any allusion to the old tradition afloat in the village that his forefathers belonged to a different class from that in which he now lived.

On the evening on which my story opens he had just come home to his tea. The big doors of the sail-shed had been closed, the busy workmen and women had separated and sauntered away, for nobody hurried at Mwntseison. There was time for everything, and Ivor Parry—Hugh Morgan's manager—had locked the door and put the key in his pocket, with the comfortable feeling, so unfamiliar to dwellers in towns,

that he not only had plenty of work to fill up his time, but also plenty of time for his work. He was tall and manly looking, ruddy featured and blue-eyed, his broad forehead surmounted by thick waves of light brown hair. It was a pleasant face to look upon, and one which inspired confidence.

When as a boy of twelve he had entered upon his work in the sail-shed, the Mishteer had been his ideal of all that was manly and strong, and he had constituted himself not only his willing servant, but his almost constant personal attendant. The Mishteer smiled at first, but gradually learnt to value the lad's attachment; and, as the years went on, they became fast friends, in spite of the difference in their ages. Although their friendship was never marked by any condescension in Hugh's manner, it was always felt by Ivor to be a privilege as well as an honour, and this feeling had grown with his growth, and increased with every year of personal intercourse with his employer. Some such thoughts as these filled his mind to-night as he traversed the bit of green sward lying between the shed and the Mishteer's house.

Having hung the key on its usual nail near the door, he peeped round the brown painted boards which divided the living-room from the passage, and saw Hugh Morgan seated at his tea. He was well under the shadow of the large open chimney, where a bright fire burned on the stone hearth, although it was May; for here, in

the face of the north-west wind, the evenings were often cold.

Madlen had drawn the round table for cosiness near to the fire, in the glow of which the tea-things and snowy cloth gleamed cheerfully, while the little brown teapot kept company with the bubbling kettle on the hearth.

"Oh, Mishteer," said Ivor, putting his head in, "I can remind Deio Pantgwyn to send the waggon and horses to-morrow; I am going that way."

"There's what I was thinking about," said Hugh; "but I thought thou wert going to the singing class to-night at Brynseion?"

"They must do without me to-night. Owen Jones is a good leader," replied Ivor.

"H'm, h'm! I don't know," said Hugh thoughtfully, "how he'll manage that change of key in the new glee; but I must watch him. Well, tell Deio to be here at eleven to-morrow, for the sails for the Lapwing have to be on the pier at Aberython by four in the afternoon."

"Right!" said Ivor laconically; "good-night." And away he went whistling, with his hat pushed back, and his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat.

The affection which he felt for his master was shared by almost every man, woman, and child in the village, where Hugh Morgan's influence had spread itself, unconsciously to him, through every household. What special trait in his character had roused this strong feeling it would be diffi-

cult to say; but the Welsh are an impressionable race, and doubtless the uprightness and firmness of his moral principles, coupled with an unswerving adherence to truth, had laid the foundation of the power which he possessed over his neighbours. He had also the reputation of being a shrewd man of business, and it would have caused a shock of astonishment to the villagers had he committed a dishonourable action, or misculated the result of a business transaction. Their attachment to him was not unmixed with a certain amount of wholesome fear, perhaps to be accounted for by the complete dependence of the majority of them upon him for their daily bread. He was a proof of the truth of the saying, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," for Mwntseison was, outwardly at least, a pattern village. There was very little brawling or drinking, considering that most of the younger inhabitants were seafaring men.

Later in the evening, as Ivor Parry wended his way towards Deio Pantgwyn's farm, his cheerful whistle accompanied a train of busy thought—pride in the consciousness that Hugh Morgan confided in him entirely and made of him a special friend, gratitude for the kindnesses which he had heaped upon him, and pleased satisfaction at the thought that he was of real service to the Mishteer. On the brow of the hill he passed the gaunt and bare Methodist Chapel, from the open doors of which came a stream of music, the result of sixty or seventy young fresh

voices, blended into the delicious harmony of a popular Welsh glee.

Ivor stopped to listen. His voice, the richest and most musical of the whole party, was much missed in the gallery of the chapel, where the singing class always met. He longed to enter, and take his usual place; but the pleasure of serving Hugh Morgan outweighed this desire. A smile flitted over his face as he listened attentively to the female voices, which took one part alone. One voice soared above the others in clearness and sweetness, and he took note of it with a side jerk of his head.

"Gwladys," he said; "I would know it anywhere; yes, I would know it amongst the angels in heaven!" and he turned down the stubby lane, which led its meandering way through fields and farmsteads to Pantgwyn, where Deio himself was whittling a stick at the house door. When reminded of his promise to send the waggon and pair of horses the next day to Hugh Morgan's workshop, he answered in a grumbling, dissatisfied voice:

"Three horses you ought to have; 'twill be a heavy load for two."

"Not a bit of it," said Ivor; "you may be certain if three were required the Mishteer would have them. If you lived in our village you would know that, Deio."

"Oh! I have no doubt," answered the man, in a sneering voice; "the King of Mwntseison is always right!"

"Well, eleven o'clock is the time—will you be there, or will you not?"

"I'll be there," said Deio, still whittling.

"Good-night!" said Ivor, turning away, and receiving no answer from the grumpy man. "Sulky old dog!" he soliloquised, as he retraced his footsteps.

When he reached the chapel all was silent, the doors were closed, and evidently the singing class was over. A look of disappointment came over his face, to be quickly followed by one of satisfaction, as he stooped to pick up a book, evidently dropped by a member of the glee class which had just dispersed.

It was a thin book with a paper cover, and he recognised it as the collection of glees then occupying the attention of the class.

"What good luck," he said, as he read the name on the cover in his own handwriting, for he had distributed the books himself. "Gwladys Price! that is lucky. I must take it up to her to-night," and putting it carelessly into his pocket, he continued his whistling and his walk.

Before he had gone many steps, however, he saw the owner of the book come round a turn of the road, evidently in search of her lost music—a girl of eighteen, slim, tall, and of unusual beauty. As she approached, Ivor was able to note every charm and grace afresh, though they were already indelibly stamped on his mind. Her wealth of brown hair, uncovered by hat or hood, was gathered into a thick knot at the back of her

head; it was drawn straight away from the broad, low brows, and on the head of a girl of shorter stature would have looked heavy from its thickness, but the graceful neck carried it with a perfect and easy pose. Her skin was of a pure white, and almost transparent clearness, her cheeks of the rich pink of the sea-shell; a pair of dark brown eyes, shaded by their long lashes, looked out rather seriously upon the world, though they sometimes added a sparkling glance to the smile on her expressive mouth; her full red lips disclosed a row of perfect teeth. In fact, Gwladys Price was, without doubt, the possessor of great beauty.

At the first glance she recognised Ivor, for—did they not work under the same roof every day of their lives except Sundays? and on those days did they not meet regularly three times in Brynseion Chapel?

"Aha, Gwladys, thou hast lost something I see, for thou are hunting about."

"Yes—and thou hast found it, for I see it kiwking * out of thy pocket."

"Well voyr! † so it is; I was bringing it to your house."

"Oh, anwl! there's lucky I am to find it so soon. I missed it as soon as I had taken off my hat. Thee wasn't at the singing class to-night?"

"No—didst miss me?"

---

* Peeping.

† Well, indeed!

"Yes; Owen Jones' voice does not lead as well as thine."

This was not exactly what he had hoped to hear.

"Was the Mishteer there?"

"Yes, of course; we could not get on far without him. What a voice he has, Ivor!"

"Yes, I thought I could distinguish it from the road—and thine, Gwladys! It was like a thread of silk in a skein of wool!"

"Since when art thou a bard, Ivor?" she said, with a merry laugh; "I won't know thee in that guise!"

"Oh! I am not taken often in that way," he said; "but some sights would make a bard of anyone!" and he gazed with rapture at the deep, brown eyes.

But Gwladys was proof against any implied compliment, her simple guileless nature was slow to take in any suggested admiration, more especially from Ivor Parry, who she knew was rather given to fun and banter. She had grown up so calmly and quietly, had budded into womanhood so suddenly, as it seemed to Ivor, that with a tender shrinking from disturbing the even tenor of her life, born of true love, he had tried, and successfully, to hide his passion from everyone, more especially from the object of it.

And thus it was that hitherto she had not guessed its existence, neither did she know that she loved Ivor! They had grown up together, had paddled in the same stream, sung in the

same glee classes, and latterly, for several years, had worked under the same employer. Ivor had long known that the happiness of his life was bound up in her, while *she* was only just awaking to the feeling that the boy who, being seven years her elder, had always constituted himself her protector, had grown into the man whom of all the world she was most desirious of pleasing.

During this digression she had thoughtfully inspected her glee book.

"There's a beautiful glee we are learning now, isn't it? only 'tis pity the words are English! There's hard to say, 'Whosse rocey fingares ope the gates of day.'"

"'Tis hard at first," he answered.

A silence fell on them as they approached the village together. Ivor was filled with varied feelings: pleasure at thus having Gwladys all to himself, anxiety lest another should rush in where he feared to tread, and above all, the difficulty of keeping his feelings under proper control in her presence. "Only eighteen," he thought. "I will wait till she is twenty; but meanwhile I will try to win her love."

Oh, blind and foolish Ivor! and no less blind Gwladys! who stood upon the brink of that awakening which should let in a flood of light and happiness upon her life. Both seemed to shrink from drawing aside the curtain which hid the future from their sight; for was it not sufficient happiness thus to meet every day, and al-

most every hour of the day? Was it not enough for Gwladys to raise her eyes from her work on the rough sail-cloth, and see his stalwart form moving about amongst the bales and cordage, and often to find his clear, blue eyes fixed upon her! A word or a smile from him would raise a flush to her face, and caused a tumultuous flutter under the pink muslin 'kerchief crossed in soft folds over her bosom. She knew it was pleasant to be near him; but that *he* found the same delight in her presence was beyond the range of her imagination, for was he not her master in one sense, being Hugh Morgan's manager, who trusted him entirely, and made no secret of his intention to take him into partnership?

As they reached her mother's door, she hesitated to ask him in; but he settled the matter by raising the thumb latch, and preceding her into the cottage.

"Hello, Nani," he said; "here is your daughter, whom I found straying about the roads, peering about like a chicken seeking for grain!"

As he spoke, a woman rose from a low oak stool by the fire with a pleasant smile of welcome. She was pale and delicate-looking, but still bore traces of the beauty which had once been hers.

"Wel! wel! Ivor Parry! it is you, indeed, who are so kind as to bring me back the truant? Many thanks to you. She rushed away like a wild thing, and I guessed she had lost her glee book. And how are Lallo and Gwen?"

"Well, indeed, and in good spirits. You

have heard the news, of course! No? Gwen is going to be married next week. Siencyn Owen and she have been long enough making up their minds, haven't they?"

"So soon!" answered Nani. "Wel! that will be a grand thing for Lallo!"

"Would you be so willing to part with Gwladys, then?"

"No, indeed; that would be quite different; but Lallo! why, I don't think there has ever been such a thing as a wedding in her family before! Wel, not for three generations whatever!"

"No, I suppose not; but Gwen thinks a new name will be better than the old one. After the bidding she will sail away with Siencyn in the Speedwell."

"I *am* glad," said Nani; "and you will be glad, Ivor!"

"Yes," said the young man thoughtfully, "I will not be sorry, although I have been very happy with Lallo and Gwen. I am going to Mary the Mill's to-morrow. Wel! I must go now. Nos da, Nani; nos da, Gwladys."

The girl was standing beside the little window looking over the sea, her brown eyes fixed on the ripples of gold and crimson that stretched away to the west. She pointed with her finger to the sinking sun as she answered:

"Nos da. I was just thinking *there* was something to make a bard of thee."

Ivor saw that she had not understood his former compliment, so would not venture upon

another, and merely saying, "'Tis a promise of fine weather," left the cottage.

"Come, dear heart," said Nani, "thee'lt want thy supper after all thy singing! How did it go to-night?"

"Oh, pretty well, mother!" and as she sat down to the shining oak table she hummed to herself the English words which had puzzled her:

> "Who teeps the hills with gold,
> Whosse rocey fingares ope the gates of day."

"What gibberish is that?" said the gentle-faced mother. "Now, don't thee get too proud to speak Welsh! And Gwen is going to be married so soon!"

"Ivor seems glad, mother."

"And no wonder! When a lass shows her love too plainly, a sensible man draws back."

Gwladys did not answer for some time, till her mother spoke again.

"Didst think Ivor Parry would ever have taken a fancy to Gwen?"

"Oh, mother, no! never such a thing came to my thoughts! Ivor Parry! no, no, he never thinks of such things!"

CHAPTER II.

HUGH MORGAN.

"Blodau'r flwyddin yw f'anwylyd,
Ebrill, Mai, Mehefin hefyd.
Ma'i fel yr haul 'n'twynu ar gy scod,
A gwenithen y genethod."

—*Old Ballad.*

"My love has every charm of weather,
April, May, and June together.
She's like the sunshine after rain,
She's like the full ear's ripest grain."

—*Trans.*

WHEN Ivor reached his own lodgings he found Gwen had brought her work out of the cwrt * to catch the last beams of the evening sun.

"Ah!" he said pleasantly, "getting on with the laces and ribbons?"

"Oh, yes," she said, with a toss of her head; "I am not one to let the grass grow under my feet when once I have made up my mind."

"No, indeed, you never were," and he disappeared under the low doorway, where his voice

* Front garden.

could be heard in cheerful conversation with Lallo.

There had been nothing unfriendly in Gwen's words, but Ivor was quite aware of the spiteful, sweeping glance which she cast after him.

When she soon after followed him into the dark penisha,* she flung her work aside, saying:

"Wfft to the old sun; he went down just as I wanted him."

"Never mind, he'll come round again to-morrow," said Lallo, "and thou canst catch his first beams if thou wishest."

Gwen made no answer, but raked the embers together with her wooden shoe. She was a pale, freckled girl, with a short nose and a wide mouth, and had no pretensions to beauty; but her shrewdness and quickness of repartee had made her a favourite with the lads of the village.

Siencyn Owen had courted her for years, had been flattered and rebuffed in turns, and had remained faithful through all; while Gwen, who had nursed a secret passion for Ivor, had in vain made every endeavour to win his affections. At length her shrewdness had made it evident to her that she was wasting her youth and her blandishments in a hopeless cause, and she had accepted the long-enduring Siencyn, although in that passionate, fiery little heart of hers, Ivor Parry still had the first place.

"Well," she said, examining the brass tips of

---

* Lower, or living-room.

her clocs,* "what did Gwladys say about the news?"

He was startled at the suddenness of the question, but knew better from experience than to try to parry Gwen's thrusts.

"She was very glad," he said, "and so was Nani——"

"I suppose so! And was she glad to get her glee book?"

"Yes, indeed!" said Ivor, rising and standing in the doorway, a black figure against the crimson sky. "Little witch!" he said to himself, "I wonder how she knew; but what doesn't she know! They said her grandmother was a witch, and her ways have descended to her granddaughter, I think."

As a fact, Gwen, returning through the fields from the singing class, had seen him stoop to pick up the book. Ivor was not absolutely free from superstition; what dweller on that rocky coast is? With his hands thrust deep in his pockets, he sauntered down the road to learn what tidings 'n'wncwl † Joss (the general newsmonger of the village) had of the Skylark which should have arrived with the morning's tide.

Meanwhile Gwen had carried her bit of work to the penucha,‡ and had locked it up in the shining, black "coffor," which contained the wardrobe of the family. She saw her mother pass the window, carrying her red pitcher to the well, and

---

* Wooden shoes. † Uncle. ‡ Upper-room, or parlour.

knowing she was alone in the house, sat down in front of the fire and gave the rein to her thoughts, and even spoke them aloud.

"She was very glad, no doubt, and they rejoiced together! Oh, yes, Ivor, I have guessed your secret long ago, and if she were not such a fool, such a simple baby, she would have seen it, too; but she doesn't, that's one comfort! Llances! * But never mind, it wasn't for nothing that I lived with my grandmother. No, it wasn't for nothing that I sat with her night after night over the peat fire! I found out much from her," and rising, she stamped her foot and clenched her hand, and an evil look came into the eyes which looked so cunningly under those half-closed lids.

"I hate her!" she said; "and granny has told me that if you have reason to hate anyone you can work them harm without going near them or touching them! And haven't I reason? 'You can keep your mind,' she said, 'so constantly fixed upon that one wish that your enemy will not prosper.' Wel, indeed! perhaps that is nonsense! I will marry Siencyn Owen—poor lad, he is faithful and true, and I will make him a good wife—but 'tis Gwladys I will often be thinking about!"

She paused a moment, and approached the little window, through which the glow of the setting sun lighted up her face; it was not pleasant to look upon.

---

* Hateful creature.

"Yes, happy thoughts!" she said, with a sneering smile. "Granny!" she cried, turning back to the gloom of the little room, and raising her hand above her head. "Granny, granny! I wish you were here to help me! and, who knows, perhaps you are! There was no love lost between you and Nani Price!"

Almost as she spoke the last words Ivor Parry returned.

"I am as hungry as a hound," he said.

"Supper then directly; and here comes mother," she said.

And as the three sat at their supper of barley bread and fresh butter, with the addition, of course, of a bowl of cawl,* no one who looked in through that little window would have guessed that such stormy passions had, a few minutes ago, filled the heart of one of the party.

Next day the large doors of the sailmaker's shed stood wide open, letting in a flood of sunshine and a refreshing breeze, which bore on its wings the scent of the seaweed lying strewn on the shore below. Inside the air was full of merry talk and laughter, while the call of the seagulls and the plash of the waves on the shore came in with the wind. The Mishteer was busily engaged with his foreman arranging the sails which had been ordered from Aberython, occasionally going to the doorway to look up the hill for the waggon which was to carry them away.

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* Leek broth.

He was about forty years of age, broad-shouldered and firmly built, his head, covered with closely curling jet black hair, was perfect in pose and shape; exposure to all weathers had browned a naturally dark skin. His black beard and moustache were trimly and carefully kept. His teeth were unusually white and even, the eyes which he was shading from the glare of the morning sun were black as night, but had in their depths such a bright sparkle, that they suggested the idea of black diamonds. His open shirt and upturned sleeves disclosed a brawny chest and muscular arms. Everything about him betokened firmness and strength; and as he turned round to address his workmen, his voice, though pleasant, and even musical, made itself heard clearly above the loud talking and laughing.

"Here, somebody!" and instantly there was a hush in the hubbub, while two or three men and women came forward to show their alacrity. "That knot of boys down the valley! I believe they are ill-treating some helpless creature in the stream!"

Before he had finished his orders, one of the workmen had clapped his hat on, and, running down to the river, was soon dispersing the little crowd of evil-doers.

"The Mishteer has seen you!" was all he said; but this was quite enough to make the dirty little brown hands loosen their hold on the stones, and the sun-burnt heads droop with

shame, while they stared with round, repentant eyes at the half-drowned dog which they had been pelting with stones, and which the messenger was carrying gently away.

"Another lucky dog like myself!" mused Will, as his long strides carried him up the bank to the sail-shed.

"Who were the boys?" asked Hugh Morgan, looking down at the frightened, shivering dog. "Ah, Shân Pentraeth's! Well, none of you boys are to play with them for a week; d'ye hear?"

"Or goren,* Mishteer," came in answer from ten or a dozen boys working together at one end of the shed.

Hugh Morgan having made a bed for the dog on a coil of ropes, turned once more to the doorway as Deio Pantgwyn appeared leading a horse and cart.

"Where's your waggon and two horses?" asked the Mishteer, with a darkening look on his face, which his work-people all knew betokened a storm.

"Wel, Mishteer, Cymro hurt his leg last night, and he was limping this morning, so I could not bring him; but it's all right, Flower can easily take the load herself."

"Stop, Deio; didn't you tell Ivor Parry last night that we ought to have three horses? and now you want one to take the load! Go home

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* All right.

again, and learn that no one who works for me shall be cruel to any animal——"

"But I thought the sails *must* be on the quay to-day?"

"So they ought; and you will put me to great expense, and Captain Morris to great inconvenience; but that horse shall not carry that load—so off you go!"

Deio stormed and swore; but the Mishteer was inexorable, and, turning to Ivor, said:

"Leave everything as it is until the full moon tide, and I will go myself to-night to explain to Captain Morris——"

"Will I borrow another horse to harness with Flower?" Deio shouted from outside, "since you think so much more of a horse than of a man's time and trouble."

"It would be too late now, and I shall not want you again."

Deio turned his horse and cart away, and the little incident seemed to pass out of Hugh Morgan's mind, for he turned his attention to some other section of his work with apparent equanimity.

"I have been thinking lately, Ivor, that we ought to have one of those machines for rolling up and holding the work in place for the women. See Gwladys Price now, how she has to drag at that sail to sew on the reef points."

"Yes," said Ivor, "it would lighten the work very much, no doubt; but it does not seem to weigh very much on her strength or spirits just

at present, does it?" and the two men looked over to where a knot of girls were listening with evident amusement to 'n'wncwl Jos, who, on the strength of the fact that he took in a weekly newspaper, constituted himself the general dispenser of news.

Every day he made his appearance in the sail-shed brimful of information, and should the newspapers be wanting in anything interesting, he did not hesitate to invent new or garnish up old tales from the store of his memory.

In personal appearance he resembled a bundle of knobs; in fact, had not a wooden leg somewhat broken the circular outline, he would have looked like a big knob himself. His head was certainly like a black knob, and his face, the colour of new polished mahogany, was made up of shining knobs, his nose being round and smooth, his cheeks the same, especially one which always held a large quid of tobacco, and his fat, brown fists were like two more knobs.

One of his eyes was always closed as if in a chronic wink, while the other was unusually wide open. It was an undecided question in the village whether the closed eyelid covered an eye or not. As a matter of fact, it did not, for he had lost it when quite a young man, and it was the account of this event which was now exciting the laughter of the women gathered around him.

"Come, let us have a share of the fun," said Hugh Morgan, approaching, his eyes fixed smilingly on Gwladys Price's laughing face. She

held her sides, and threw her head back in a fit of laughter, her dimpled face and white teeth looking very charming in their abandon of mirth.

"Oh, dear, dear! its 'n'wncwl Jos! Oh, dyr anwl, I have laughed till my sides ache."

"Yes, there's a girl she is to laugh," said 'n'wncwl Jos, putting in the stops with his wooden leg, "in spite of those serious brown eyes of hers. Hegh, hegh, hegh! I'll back her for a good laugh against any other girl in Mwntseison." (Stump, stump.) "I was only telling her how I lost my eye long ago, and that's how she takes it! Hegh, hegh! true as I am here. I was in the Bay of Loango, out there in Africa, me sitting on the edge of the ship, The Queen of the South, Captain Lucas, and whew! back I went among the sharks. In a moment an old ghost of a fellow darted after me. 'Here I'm going,' says I to myself, 'safe to Davey Jones' locker, and in a nasty conveyance, too!' (There she is laughing again, look!) The shark stopped a minute just to take a good look at me, when what should I feel but a sharp hook in my eye. I knew at once 'twas the rope and the hook from the ship, and Diwedd anwl! * I'd rather have forty hooks in my eye than be swallowed by that old white ghost. I was reaching the sandy bottom just as the hook caught me, and partly with the pain, and partly with joy, I danced and floundered about ('twas before I lost my leg) and

* Good Lord!

kicked up such a shindy, that I made a thick cloud of sand about me, and the old shark backed a bit, and I tugged the rope, and they pulled me up."

"By the hook in thine eye?" asked Gwen sarcastically, for 'n'wncwl Jos's stories were always taken *cum grano salis.*

"Diwedd anwl! No! I took that out pretty sharp—hegh! hegh! hegh!—and fastened it in the band of my trousses. 'Fforwel, old boy!' sez I, with my thumb to my nose, though I was nearly losing my breath; and as true as I'm here, the old fellow was offended"—(stump, stump)—"hegh! hegh! hegh!—for he made a spring at me, and snapped at my leg, just as they were pulling me out of the water. If it wasn't for my trousses he'd have had her off! I have thanked the Lord hundred thousand times for those good, strong trousses, so glad I am that the old fellow didn't have the pleasure of his dinner from me! not so much for the worth of the leg (for she often gave me trouble with rheumatics—hegh! hegh!—and she does now, though she's buried safe in Glasgow! True as I'm here she does!), but to spite the old shark! 'Not for the worth of the loaf,' as the woman said, 'but for the roguery of the baker!'—hegh! hegh! hegh!" (Stump, stump, stump.)

"Keep the rest till to-night, 'n'wncwl Jos," said Hugh Morgan, joining in the laugh which followed the story; "I'm coming in to have a pipe with you. How is Mari?"

"Mari!" said the old man, with a strangely softened look on his sunburnt, shining face. "Mari! oh, she's very well, calon fâch! * she is well, indeed; though, now I remember, she had a headache—there's a brute I am to forget!" and off he stumped in great haste to make up for his forgetfulness.

Gwladys dried her tears of laughter, and applied herself with renewed attention to the huge sail, of which she held one corner, while Gwen sewed at the other.

"'Tis heavy for thee, lass," said Hugh Morgan, drawing near, and rolling a log under the corner which Gwladys was working at.

The girl smiled, but looked a little embarrassed by the Mishteer's kindness.

"Oh, no! no heavier than Gwen's corner, Mishteer, and I am quite as strong."

It was said innocently, and Hugh knew it was; but a deep flush overspread his face as he turned to the other girl, and offered her the same help.

"The same log will do for both," he said.

"Oh, no need," said Gwen, with a slight sneer in her voice, as much as she dared show the Mishteer; "of course this corner is lighter than the other."

As Hugh passed on to another set of workers, she looked after him with a slowly dawning perception in her eyes.

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* Dear heart.

"He is very kind to thee," she said, looking at Gwladys under her half-closed lids; "what has come over him?"

"Wel, indeed, he is always kind, isn't he? even to his dogs. See how that little half-drowned dog wags his tail when he passes."

Gwen did not answer; but as her companion proceeded with her work she looked at her furtively from time to time with hatred and jealousy in her eyes.

The afternoon found them again at their work. Gwen had had time, while she drank her cawl and ate her barley bread at dinner, to arrange her ideas.

"Art coming to my wedding on Monday?" she asked carelessly.

"Oh, anwl, of course! Thee'st asked me and mother, and we are coming."

"Madlen is to be my bridesmaid, and Ivor Parry will be the teilwr.* Who shall I find for thee? Dye Pentraeth? I have heard thee art fond of him!"

"Dye Pentraeth?" said Gwladys, with perfect composure. "Wel, indeed! he will do very well for me; I will get on all right with him; but I don't think thou hast ever heard I am fond of him, Gwen; thee hast made a mistake."

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* Best man. In olden times the man who made the wedding garments was always supposed to see his employer safely through the ceremony, hence the best man is still called the "tailor."

"Perhaps, indeed!" said Gwen, with a yawn. "Was it Ivor Parry, perhaps? I didn't take much notice."

Now, indeed, Gwladys was moved, and Gwen watched her mercilessly as a crimson flush overspread cheeks, forehead, and neck.

"They were right, too, I see," she said, in a sarcastic tone. "Wel, wel, merch i, 'tis to be hoped he will be pleased when I tell him,"

"They were *wrong!*" said Gwladys, covering her face with both hands for a moment; and then, standing up, she indignantly threw the corner of the sail away from her. "Thee hast insulted me enough! To say I loved a man who did not love me! Wel wyr!" and her fiery Welsh blood surged through her veins, her bosom heaved, and her eyes flashed, and Gwen was satisfied.

"Twt, twt," she said, "there's no need for a beacon fire! I wasn't thinking what I said——"

"Wilt tell him such a thing?" said Gwladys; "if thee dost, I will tell the Mishteer!"

"Not I!" said Gwen; "I have other things to think about." And sitting down to her work again, Gwladys' quick temper subsided as suddenly as it had arisen, and they parted at the end of the day with no outward signs of anger.

Later on, when the sun had set and the sea lisped and murmured down in the little harbour, Gwladys took her creel on her shoulders, and made her way across the wet, shining sands. Her destination was a creek just round the reef of

rocks that bounded the harbour on the south side, where Nance Owen gathered her laver weed every day, leaving it in a shady place until Gwladys, to whom the work was a labour of love, could carry it home for her, as she was too weak and infirm herself.

The moon rose round and golden behind the hills, and already threw black shadows across the beach. Gwladys did not sing as usual, but walked slowly with bent head.

Gwen's words rankled in her mind and troubled her much. Her love for Ivor had been so deeply buried, so carefully hidden even from herself, that it pained and shocked her to have it thus dragged into the garish light. But—— "Was Gwen right? did she love him?" and with flushed cheeks she was forced to confess to herself, "Yes—I love him; but he shall never know it!" After crossing the beach, she found the tide was not low enough for her to reach the further creek; so, sitting down, she waited, looking out over the sea which the sunset glow tinted with a coppery red. Suddenly a boat came round the point, and in it Gwladys recognised Ivor. As the prow of the boat grated on the shingle, she rose, and stood uncertain what to do.

"Hello! Gwladys, thee'st mistaken the time to-night, for the tide won't be down for another half hour. See! I have brought the laver weed for thee." And, jumping lightly on the shore, he filled the creel which she carried on her shoulders. "Would'st like a row, lass?"

"Wel, indeed," said Gwladys, "I haven't been on the water a long time; but my mother won't know where I am, whatever."

"Oh! come, we won't be long——"

"Wel, indeed, I don't know," she said again, but at the same time allowing herself to be helped into the boat. Slipping the creel from her shoulders, she took the second oar, for she was as much accustomed to the boats and the rowing as any sailor in the place, having spent the greater part of her childhood on the shore and on the bay. They rowed silently for some time out towards the sunset, where the coppery glow on the water was beginning to catch the silver of the moon on its ripples; then shipping their oars, they floated idly on. Gwladys bent over the side of the boat and drew her fingers through the smooth waters.

The moon shone full on Ivor's handsome and sunburnt face. They did not speak much, but in the hearts of both arose a full tide of content and happiness. They were alone on the heaving, whispering waters; sea and sky seemed to fold them in a mantle of love and beauty; the bewitching softness of the hour threw its glamour over them; and though the strong influence of the situation was felt by both with all the fervour of youth and romance, they kept their feelings under strong restraint, and their conversation was confined to ordinary commonplaces.

"Here's a splendid evening!" said Ivor, stooping also towards the deep green water in

the shadow of the boat. His voice was low and tender, and Gwladys drooped her eyes to her fingers rippling through the water.

"Yes, beautiful! And last night was as beautiful!"

"Not quite," said Ivor; "there has never been such a sunset—such a moonrise—I think."

"Perhaps, indeed," said Gwladys.

"Art going to Gwen's wedding?" he asked.

"Yes, I think," she said.

"And to the bidding?"

"Yes, I suppose. Is the Mishteer coming?"

"Not to the wedding, I think," said Ivor; "we couldn't expect the Mishteer to do that, though he is so isel,* but to the bidding he will come——"

"Yes, indeed!" said Gwladys, "and with his hand in his pocket I am sure. He is so kind; he gave my mother our cow, you know; indeed, I don't know what we should have done without him since my father died; but let us go back."

"Why," asked Ivor, "art tired? or is there anyone waiting for thee?"

"Tired? no; and nobody is waiting for me, except my mother, perhaps."

"Art sure no lover is waiting thee?"

"I am sure," said Gwladys, raising her brown eyes to his; "I have no lover to wait for me——"

Ivor's eyes trembled as he answered:

"Thee canst not be sure of that, Gwladys;

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* Without pride.

perhaps thee hast one who hides his love from thee?"

"Wel, indeed," she said laughing, "he succeeds in hiding it completely then, for I know of none; but I think my mother will wonder where I am, and Nance will come and look for her laver weed."

Ivor did not speak, but, taking up their oars, they were soon silently cleaving the waves, and drawing near the shore again. The night air swept by them, loosening the girl's hair, which streamed back on the wind, and sometimes, as Ivor bent to the oar, it swept across his face, and for a moment he was tempted with one hand to press it to his lips, while with the other he still handled his oar.

Gwladys looked round. "I thought something pulled my hair?"

"Perhaps!" said Ivor; "who knows? On a night like this the mermaids and mermen come out, and may be one might like to touch thy hair."

Gwladys flushed in the darkness. She was sure it was Ivor's hand that had touched her, and it woke a thrill of happiness within her, an emotion which, however, she instantly smothered.

"He is playing with me," she said, "and he means no more than the sea breeze means when it touches my hair." And they rowed on again in silence, until they reached the strand on one side of the harbour.

"Wilt come another night, Gwladys?"

"Perhaps, indeed," said the girl, settling her creel in its place, and jumping lightly from the prow of the boat on to the rock.

As they parted on the shore, the moon shone full upon her, and Ivor took note afresh of every charm in the varying expression of her face.

"Hast enjoyed it, lass?"

"Yes, to be sure," she answered.

"Wel, nos da."

"Nos da," said Gwladys, beginning her way over the beach.

He did not offer to accompany her, and she thought she understood his reason.

"He would not like to be seen walking with me in the moonlight," she mused. "Well, he is right; but he need not fear I would think he meant anything by it," and she tossed her head proudly as she entered Nance Owen's cottage and deposited her basket of weed on the table.

The house-door stood wide open, the moonlight and the sea wind streaming in together, a few smouldering turfs burnt on the hearth, the old cat sat beside them and blinked, but Nance was out gossiping; and Gwladys went out again, and pursued her uneven path up the village road to her own home with a strange sense of happiness in her heart, which would not be stamped out even by that potent emotion, "Welsh pride."

CHAPTER III.

MARI "VONE."

"O Gwyn ei fyd! yr hwn nis gwyr
Am ferch fu'n flinder iddo;
Ond wn i ddim yn sicr chwaith,
Ai gwyn ei fyd ai peidio!"

—*Ceiriog.*

"Happy the man whose guarded heart
The chain of love refuses;
But yet in truth I am not sure,
Whether he gains or loses."

—*Trans.*

High up the village, and perched on a little knoll, overlooking what was politely called "the road," stood a cottage, in nowise different from the other houses, except that, perhaps, its walls were whiter and its thatch was browner. Its two tiny windows were clear as crystal, an arch over each being painted brick red; the top of the door was ornamented in the same way; and inside, the earthen floor of the passage, which was almost as hard and shining as marble, had its edges marked in a bordering of the same dark red.

The door stood wide open; indeed, it was never closed from one year's end to another, except at night and in stormy weather. Within the penisha sat a girl busily knitting, though her thoughts were evidently not on her work, for her eyes were fixed dreamily on the sunset sky which lightened up the little window. But stay, was she a girl? No! if age counts by the number of years that have passed since birth, for Mari Vaughan (or Vone, as it is pronounced in Wales) was thirty-five years of age, and had long taken her place amongst the elder and soberer portion of the community; the younger and more frivolous girls had dropped her out of their companionship, only remembering her when at times she appeared amongst them, and then with an uncomfortable feeling of being eclipsed by her beauty. She was tall and graceful, her figure had lost nothing of the fulness and charm of youth, her pale golden hair was as luxuriant as ever, and her face was one to be always remembered. She was pale, but not with the hue of sickness, for her health was perfect; her skin was not of the milky white, which, in Gwladys' face, contrasted so beautifully with the glowing cheeks, but more of an ivory whiteness; her eyes of deep blue were shaded by the white lids, fringed with brown lashes; her teeth were even and white, and rather large; a dimpled cleft in her chin gave the pale face the amount of spirit and life which it required; and when she spoke, there was a liquid softness in her musical voice, which

gave the most ordinary remarks a tone of tenderness.

Fifteen years before, she had passed through a crisis in her life, which had left indelible traces upon her character. At twenty she had given her heart to Hugh Morgan—the handsomest and most promising lad in the village—a promise which had been amply fulfilled by his subsequent life. 'N'wncwl Jos, who stood in the place of parents to the orphan girl, had given a willing consent. Hugh had already bought his business and re-furnished his cottage home at his father's death, and Mari loved him with a love deeper, even in its intensity, than she herself was aware of; but with the thoughtlessness of youth, petted and indulged by her uncle, and somewhat spoiled by the attentions of her lover, she had foolishly listened to the blandishments of a new suitor, who had appeared in the village, a sailor, who bore the distinguishing charm of a foreign name, that of "Alfred Smith." Still more interesting, he could not speak a word of Welsh. He spoke his own language with a peculiar accent, which, though in reality a vulgar Cockney, fascinated the simple Mari, accustomed only to the broad, strong tones of her native tongue. Alas, for the perversity of Fate! Hugh Morgan, who had noticed a slight coldness in her manner of late, and, moreover, had heard sundry gossiping rumours in the village, had brought matters to a crisis by reproaching her with her fickleness, and proposing that

her marriage with him should take place at once.

"The house is ready, and I am ready, and longing for thy presence, Mari. Art ready thyself?"

"No, I am not," was her answer, with a toss of her head; and thou mustn't hurry and order me as if I were a child!"

Hugh, who also had the hasty temper of his race, burst into a flame of passion.

"It is that d——d Sais!" * he said, his eyes flashing and his breath coming in short gasps. "Thou hadst better tell me the truth at once——"

"What truth?" said Mari.

"That thou preferrest him to me; that while I was working for thee by day, and dreaming of thee at night, a foolish word from the Englishman's slippery tongue drew thee away from me! Such love is not worth having!"

"If that's how it is, it is not worth giving," said Mari; "and so it won't grieve thee to hear that I have none to give."

She spoke in a pert little voice, and with a toss of her head, very unlike her usual manner.

Hugh was silent for a moment, while he tried to control his angry feelings, and the blood surged through his veins and sang in his ears. Had it come to this? His deep and unswerving love for Mari, who had been the star of his life from boyhood upwards, to be crushed ruthlessly! his

* Englishman.

tender feelings to be trampled upon at the word of a Sais!

When he spoke next his voice trembled, and he was pale and agitated.

"Think well, Mari; I am not one to turn from my word, or to change the colour of my heart as I change my coat; so think well, lass, before thou answerest my next question, 'Wilt have me or not?'"

"Oh, not, then!" said Mari.

She seemed to be possessed by a spirit of perversity, which ever after she wondered at.

They had just reached her uncle's, and she prepared to leave her lover, and enter the house.

"Stop one moment, Mari," he said, grasping her arm tightly; "remember that although I love thee now with my whole heart, and will forgive thee thy fickleness and forget thy folly, if thou wilt come to me, and draw back thy words—yet——"

Mari was beginning a hasty answer, but he interrupted her with a fierce—

Hush! listen. I will sit down there on the limekiln until the moon has set—she is not far from her setting; thou wilt see me by the glow of the limekiln," and his voice changed to a low, pleading tone. "I will be waiting for thee, Mari, and if thou comest, my arms will be open to receive thee; but if not, I will *never* ask thee again; and, moreover, I will do all in my power to shut thine image out of my heart."

"Nos da," was all her answer, as she entered the cottage.

The house was empty, for 'n'wncwl Jos was out on one of his fishing expeditions, and running into the penucha, she bolted the door, and threw herself on her bed in a perfect storm of tears.

"Oh Hugh, Hugh, beth na'i?" * She knew now how much she loved him—how every feeling of her heart would be torn in losing him. She knew that the flattery and admiration of Sais were as nothing to her compared to Hugh Morgan's love, and yet—and yet—she *could* not stoop to ask his pardon. She rose and looked through the little window; she saw the glow from the limekiln, and also saw the dark figure sitting there. The moon hung very low in the sky, and she watched it tremblingly. The clock struck in the penisha; time was passing, and soon it would be too late.

Another storm of tears—and she rose again to look at the dark figure by the limekiln. The moon had already touched the horizon.

"Should she rush out now and ask his forgiveness?" She had a feeling that the dim, grey quietness of the night was a forecast of what her life would be without Hugh, while the light and warmth of the glowing kiln portrayed his deep love for her. She had but to ask, and she would be folded in its mantle of happiness. But the

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* What shall I do?

moon—she's gone!—and Mari fell sobbing on the floor..

She was roused by the stumping of 'n'wncwl Jos's wooden leg, and rose slowly and straightened herself, and, turning to the window, saw the dark figure by the limekiln was gone; and she passed over the threshold of the penucha with a strange perception that all the delight, the passionate love, the intense enjoyment of life were left behind her, and that the future contained for her only the dim and grey quietness of evening. But this was fifteen years ago, and Hugh had never asked her again. She had never spoken to Alfred Smith afterwards. The very thought of him was hateful to her.

As the long years went by, she and Hugh were frequently thrown together in that small community. They learnt to meet without embarrassment, and to part without a pang; and gradually Hugh's strong nature found its solace in his work, and in the ever-increasing claims of his work-people upon his time and thoughts. He alone knew how hard had been the struggle to regain calmness and comparative content after the shattering of his hopes which Mari's fickleness had brought upon him; but it came at last, and he thought he had entirely got over his old love-affair.

True, no day seemed complete on which he had not seen Mari Vone. His love for her had developed into a perfect friendship—so he thought. He scarcely ever arranged a business

transaction without asking her advice, and although she was not employed in his sail-shed, every incident connected with his work was laid before her, and her opinion on every matter weighed much with him.

She had never married, neither had Hugh, and their intercourse had outwardly lost every trace of the romance which once hung round it. Thus it was with Hugh Morgan; but what had the years brought to Mari? At first a deep and bitter regret, a wild unrest, which nothing but pride enabled her to hide. She knew that the misunderstanding between her and her lover was the subject of much gossiping interest around her, and she determined that no one should guess her sorrow, or see any sign of her pain. She schooled herself to meet Hugh with calmness and outward indifference, though not a tone of his voice or a change of looks or manner escaped her notice. Deep in her heart she nourished her undying love for him, and when, as time went on, she saw that a warm friendship had taken the place of love in his heart, she endeavoured, with the unselfishness of a true woman, to accommodate herself to his wishes and ideas.

The fifteen years that had passed since she and Hugh had watched the moon sink beneath the horizon with such tumultuous feelings, had scarcely altered her or aged her in the least. Time seemed to have stood still with her, or to hesitate to lay his destroying finger upon her

charms of person, although on her spirit his hand was ever setting new and tender graces, and as she sat at her knitting, with her eyes fixed on the sunset, her ear was strained to catch the faintest sound of an approaching footstep. And here it comes. And in the darkening twilight Hugh Morgan stoops his head as he enters the low doorway. Mari did not rise; these visits were of too frequent occurrence for ceremony, and she merely looked up from her shining needles as the stalwart form stood before her, asking, "Where's 'n'wncwl Jos?"

"He's not come in; wilt look for him? Most like he is smoking on the lower limekiln."

"Well, I will wait."

"B'tshwr," * said Mari, rising and pushing the rush chair towards him; "supper will be ready directly," she said. "We have fresh buttermilk from Glanynys."

"And potatoes?"

"Of course."

"Well, I will stop and have some, for that is a dish Madlen always spoils."

"'Tis pity, indeed; I must show her how to do them."

"Can diolch," † he said.

"What dost want 'n'wncwl Jos for—anything particular?"

"Yes," said Hugh, "I want his advice—and

* Certainly. † A hundred thanks.

yours, Mari, on a subject very important to me. But here is 'n'wncwl Jos!"

As the old man stumped in, he greeted Hugh with the usual friendly "Hello! Mishteer," before he seated himself on the settle, Mari at once placing beside him a bucket of sea-sand, into which he squirted his tobacco juice with unerring aim, for he had learned under Mari's régime to dread a spot upon the speckless floor. Hugh had taken out his pipe, and the two men were soon sending wreaths of smoke up the big, open chimney, as they sat round the bright fire of culm * balls.

Gwen's approaching marriage was the subject of conversation.

"Well, indeed, I think he's a lucky chap," said 'n'wncwl Jos, "for she's a tidy girl, and saving, and steady."

"Yes, very good girl," said Hugh.

"Ivor Parry will have to find new lodgings now," said Mari.

"Yes, Mary the Mill is glad to have him. Are you going to the wedding, Mari?"

"Yes, I have promised. You are not, I suppose?"

"Well, no—but I am going to the bidding."

"Yes, there's what I heard."

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* A small kind of anthracite rubble mixed with clay and water, which, made into oval balls, burn slowly, but with a fierce bright glow.

"I was thinking that would be enough," he said. "What do you think?"

"Quite enough," said Mari. "Being the Mishteer, they would scarcely expect you to both; and if you went to this one, you would offend others by refusing——"

"Exactly what I was thinking," said Hugh.

"We had better have supper now," said Mari, "the potatoes are done." And taking the huge crock which hung by a chain from the wide chimney, she placed it on the floor, and with the large wooden spoon or "lletwad" mashed the snowy potatoes into a steaming paste, adding a little salt and cream. From this crock she partly filled the black, shining bowls which were ranged on the table, placing a wooden spoon for herself and her uncle. A large jug of buttermilk stood in the centre of the table.

For the Mishteer, Mari placed a quaint, slender silver spoon; but he indignantly pushed it away, and she laughingly substituted for it a wooden one like her own.

"Mari, fâch," he said, "what dost think I am made of that I should eat out of a silver spoon while thou art satisfied with a wooden one? Not I, indeed! Well, I don't think anyone ever did cook potatoes like thee. More? Caton pawb! no, I have made two suppers in one."

After supper she closed the door, and throwing a log over the culm fire made it blaze up brightly.

A spirit of rest and content came over Hugh,

which he invariably felt in her presence. Her needles clicked, and her golden head was bent over her work; the shining points of her little shoes peeped out under her red petticoat; and as she chatted cheerfully, her white teeth glistening and her dimpled chin adding its charm to her fair pale face, even 'n'wncwl Jos noticed how fair she was to look upon. Hugh was accustomed to sudden awakenings to her charms, but had schooled and hardened himself against their influence. Besides, to-night he was pre-occupied —his thoughts were full of something else. The clock in the corner struck nine, drawing near bedtime in that simple village.

"Howyr bâch!" said Hugh, with a start; "it will be time to go before I have said what I wanted to."

"What is it?" inquired Mari.

"Well, thou know'st," he answered, "I always like 'n'wncwl Jos's advice; and—and I am thinking of getting married."

Mari's heart stood still; and at that moment, while her needles continued to click, and she showed no sign of the agony within her even then, the hope that had been nourished for fifteen years died; not the love, for that was all enduring and undying. And while she passed through a spasm of pain, she yet raised her white lids calmly, and looking full into Hugh Morgan's face, said:

"It will be better for thee than living alone."

"Diws anwl!" said 'n'wncwl Jos; "there's

news I'll have to give in the sail-shed to-morrow. Nobody'll listen to the war in China."

"Stop, stop," said Hugh; "you must tell no one. Perhaps the girl won't have me, man. Wait until I give you leave." And turning his black eyes upon those into which he had once looked with passionate love, he said, "I'm afraid, Mari, thou wilt not approve of my choice."

"Who is she?" asked Mari.

"Gwladys Price."

There was a dead silence for a moment. Mari put down her knitting; 'n'wncwl Jos changed his quid from one cheek to the other.

"Jâr-i!" he said; "she's a nice girl."

"What dost say, Mari?" said Hugh; "too young, dost think?"

"Well," she answered calmly, "she's the best girl in the village; and if she does not think herself too young, it won't matter what others think."

"There's just what I was thinking," said Hugh. "Mari, thou art always a sensible woman. She has no other lover, and er—and er—in fact, I love her. I have been a lonely man for years—since the old days, Mari. Nay, don't blush; I'm not blaming thee, lass. And perhaps if it had been otherwise, we wouldn't now be such perfect friends."

"Perhaps, indeed," said Mari, beginning to recover her equanimity. She saw in her mind's eye another long stretch of arid desert before

her; but her courage rose, and her love was not quenched. She would still be his friend, and that could bring nothing but blessing upon him. Though unchanged and undiminished in its depth and fervour, her love had become more and more free from the selfishness and taint of earthly passion.

"Well, in my little deed!" said 'n'wncwl Jos, "if any girl in Mwntseison could tempt me to do such a foolish thing as to get married, 'twould be Gwladys Price."

"Caton pawb!" said Hugh, with a merry ring in his voice, which was not lost upon Mari's quick ear; don't you go and be my rival now, 'n'wncwl Jos, or I will have no chance, indeed!"

"No doubt, no doubt!" answered the old man, with a perfect storm of laughter and stumps of his wooden leg.

Mari went on knitting quietly. "Thou hast my best wishes, Hugh," she said at last, looking up into his face; "thou know'st that."

"Yes," said Hugh laconically. He took her hand in his, and for a moment he longed to ask her if his marriage would cost her one pang of pain; but with the memory of the long years of calm friendship lying between them and that evening when the moon set too soon for both, how could he ask such a question? So he was silent, and the opportunity went by for ever. "Nos da!"* was all he said, "and hundred

* Good-night.

thanks for your good wishes. Nos da, 'n'wncwl Jos; none of this in the sail-shed, mind, until I give you leave."

"No, no!" said the old man; "but diws anwl, don't be long." And he stumped his wooden leg four or five times on the ground.

Outside in the moonlight Hugh Morgan walked a few paces, with his head rather drooping on his chest, thinking, not of his new love, but of his old. How fair she was still! how sweet and tender! how true and tried a friend! God grant that through life her friendship might continue his!

At the turn of the path he came in sight of Gwladys' cottage. A light was in the window, and a figure passed and re-passed before it. The night breeze blew straight from him to the cottage, and on its wings Hugh sent a fervent "God bless her!" while a light awoke in his eyes and a flush rose into his face, which, he was glad to remember, no one could see.

"Only eighteen!" he said, "and I—forty! old enough to be her father! Will she have me? If she will, she shall never repent it; my love shall hedge her in, and shield her from every earthly ill." And as he entered his house he felt as he had not done for years—how lonely it was, and he pictured Gwladys' presence lighting up the quiet hearth.

When he smoked his last pipe under the big chimney his thoughts returned to Mari.

"How completely she had forgotten the old days! and what a good thing it was! 'It will be better for thee than living alone!' Kind friend, she always knew what was wisest and best!"

CHAPTER IV.

GWEN'S "BIDDING."

GWEN and Siencyn had been married in the morning with much fluttering of ribbons and firing of guns. The Speedwell, at anchor in the bay, gaily bedecked with pennons and flags, was to sail away for Ireland with the evening tide, bearing the happy Siencyn and his bride on their honeymoon voyage. Each having a frugal mind, meant to combine business with pleasure, and, therefore, were to carry with them in the hold a cargo of slates. But a more important function even than the wedding was to take place in the afternoon, namely, "the bidding." A week before, the invitations had been sent out—two men of substantial standing in the village having, in the usual fashion, volunteered to leave the "bidding" letters at every farm or cottage in the parish. They were printed in the same formula, as they had borne for generations, and were as follows:—

"DEAR FRIENDS,—As it is our intention to enter the matrimonial state, we are encouraged

by our friends to make a 'bidding,' which will be held on Monday, the 28th inst., at our own house in Mwntseison, in the parish of Abersethin. Your agreeable company on the occasion is humbly solicited; and whatever donation you may be pleased to confer on us then will be gratefully received, and repaid whenever called for.

"We are, dear friends,

"Your obedient servants,

"SIENCYN OWEN,

"GWEN HUGHES.

"The young man, together with his mother and brother, desire that all gifts due to them will be returned to him on that day, and will be thankful for all additional favours.

"The young woman and her mother desire that all gifts due to them be returned to her on that day, and will be thankful for all favours granted.

"*N.B.*—All gifts due to the young man's late father, Robert Owen, are humbly solicited to be repaid."

In earlier years this outspoken reminder was couched in still plainer terms:—

"Come," it said, "with your goodwill on the plate; bring current money—a shilling, or two, or three, or four, or five, with cheese and butter. We invite the husband and wife, and children and men servants, from the greatest to the least."

And it promised "drink cheap, stools to sit

on, and fish, if we can catch them; but if not, hold us excusable."

With this insinuating reminder before them, every householder began to search the stores of his memory.

"Let me see," said one of the invited, "what did Lallo give our Nell? A shilling, I think it was; and old Peggi Shân, her mother, gave a sixpence, I know, for I remember Nell's burying it in the garden, for she was afraid of a witch's money—that's eighteen pence for me."

"Jâr-i, what must I give?" said 'n'wncwl Jos, scratching his head. "Old Peggi Shân came to thy mother's bidding, Mari, and gave sixpence, for I kiwked * at it as it went into the basin, and I fished it out pretty sharp. 'Ach y fi!' I said, 'no witch's money for my sister!' and sure as I'm here, 'twas a *bad* sixpence; so I don't owe much to Gwen."

But when the bidding day arrived, 'n'wncwl Jos was one of the noisiest and merriest there, welcoming the guests as if he were the father of the bride. "Dewch 'mewn! dewch 'mewn!" † and he guided each fresh arrival to the door of a disused cowhouse at the end of the garden, where Gwen sat in state just inside the door, across which a table had been placed; on this table stood a basin covered with a plate ready to receive the gifts of her friends. As soon as a piece of money was put upon it Gwen tilted the plate,

* Peeped. † "Come in! come in."

and emptied its contents into the basin, replacing it again empty and ready for the next donation.

"Come along!" said 'n'wncwl Jos, piloting Gwladys Price to the door, "here's the bride! Nothing less than a shilling now, Nani! for you don't know how soon Gwen will have to return it."

Nani smiled. "Not too soon I hope; I don't want to lose my daughter yet."

She dropped a shilling on the plate, and Gwladys followed with her modest sixpence. Everybody said "Priodas dda i chi!" * as he or she turned away to make room for another.

Gwen was very smiling and grateful as the sixpences and shillings and even half-crowns came tumbling on to the plate, and the basin had several times to be handed over to the bridesmaid, who quickly slipped an empty one in its place.

"What a good bidding she's having," whispered the women to each other, as they kept a keen eye on the numerous changes of basins. "Why! I've seen a pink and a green and a blue on the board already! Siencyn has done a good thing for himself, whatever!"

There was a little excitement in the company as Hugh Morgan came down between the cabbage-beds, followed by Ivor Parry, and there was quite a craning of necks to see how much the Mishteer put on the plate.

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* "A happy bridal to you!"

"A gold sovereign, as sure as I'm here!" said a woman to her neighbours; "and Ivor Parry two crown pieces! Wel wyr! there's rich she'll be!"

"Oh! Mishteer bâch!" said Gwen, "a piece of gold! Wel wyr! did man ever hear of such a thing! A hundred thanks!" and she rose to make a bob curtsey. "Well, indeed, indeed, you are too kind, and you must let Siencyn always carry your culm and coal in the Speedwell for nothing! Oh, yes, indeed you must! And I thank thee, too, Ivor Parry, and hope to return thy gift soon at thine own bidding!"

Well, "Priodas dda," said both men, shaking hands and turning towards the house, where the fun and merriment began to wax loud and furious under the influence of the "cwrw da," * which Siencyn dispensed with liberal hand.

In the penisha a crowd of women sat round a long table drinking tea and eating "light cakes," a delicious kind of batter cake, considered indispensable at a Welsh festive gathering; while in the penucha every guest of the opposite sex was expected to taste the ale which had been brewed for the occasion, and to eat one of the diamond-shaped "bidding cakes." Here there was much boisterous laughter and loud talking, which was somewhat hushed as the Mishteer entered.

"A 'blue' for the Mishteer!" shouted somebody to Siencyn, who presided at the tap. And

* Good beer.

Hugh drained his cup, and placed his cake in his pocket. Having wished Siencyn "Priodas dda," and made a few joking remarks to the men, who had soon recovered from their momentary silence, he made his way into the penisha, where Gwladys Price and her mother were coming to an end of their tea and light cakes, Dyc Pentraeth having deserted them for the more potent charms of the beer barrel.

"Come," said Hugh, "this is more in my line; a cup of tea, Esther!" and he took a vacant seat next to Gwladys, who blushed at the honour, and handed him a plate of light cakes.

"How fortunate for me to find this seat vacant, Gwladys, unless, indeed, thou wert keeping it for someone else."

"No, no, indeed," stammered the girl, for her tender conscience told her she had not been without hope that Ivor might come in and fill it; but he had been pounced upon by a fat farm wife, who kept him in attendance upon her and her daughter—the little tricks of society not being confined to one class.

Hugh made most of his time. His sparkling black eyes and ready wit, together with a certain earnestness of manner and a superior education to that of his neighbours, gave an indefinable charm to his conversation, which the simple women around him were not slow to feel, though they could not have explained it in words.

Gwladys, amused and flattered, was soon chatting and laughing unrestrainedly, her face glow-

ing with the fun and excitement of the occasion. Deep below the surface was the unconfessed longing for Ivor's presence, and when at last he entered the room, and took his seat on the opposite side of the table, she found it difficult to keep up her interest in her companion's conversation.

Hugh Morgan's experiences of life being limited to one small village, in the shelter of a lonely bay, he had no great range of subjects upon which to dilate; but his natural good taste and intelligence made him aware that the daily occupation of the sail-shed had better be kept in the background, and he confined himself to the fairs and eisteddfods of the neighbourhood, and amused Gwladys by a description of a competition in which he had been adjudicator, where the three competitors had quarrelled so violently on the platform, that they had to be turned out of the meeting.

"Oh, anwl! I wish I had been there," she said.

"I was there," said Ivor. "I am sorry, Mishteer, to call you away, but Captain Roberts wants to see you about those sails which were torn so much in the last gale. Will I take him a message for you?"

"No, no," said Hugh, rising at once; "business must be attended to. Come and take care of Gwladys while I am gone." And Ivor, nothing loth, took his place beside her.

"What a good bidding Gwen has had," she said, examining her plate shyly.

It was the general opinion, but Ivor did not agree with it. He shrugged his shoulders, and said:

"A bad bidding I call it. I have not seen thee to speak a word to to-day."

The pattern on Gwladys' plate seemed to interest her still more.

"The Mishteer has been making me laugh about the Abersethin Eisteddfod," she said.

"Yes—I was glad to see him so lively; it is seldom he speaks to a woman; and a good thing they say, for they all fall in love with him."

"Wel, indeed, there is something very nice about him," said Gwladys. "I can't think how Mari Vone refused him. She did once, they say."

"Yes, so I have heard. Not often do parted lovers become such good friends as they are."

While he had been speaking, he had poured out a glass of the foaming cwrw which Siencyn had just brought in, and he held it towards the girl, who shook her head, saying, "I prefer tea."

"But thou'lt drink from my hand," he said, in a low tone; and Gwladys, knowing that a refusal to the request, "Drink from my hand," would be reckoned an insult, smilingly took the glass and put her lips to it.

"No more? I will drink the rest to thy health then, lass, and may thy life be full of love and happiness! Wilt wish something for me?"

"Yes, I wish thee the same!" and Ivor seemed satisfied.

Gwladys was in a dream of bliss, and it was only when Hugh Morgan returned, and Ivor rose to make room for him, that she began as usual to fear that she had made her preference for the latter too apparent. She called herself to task for her too evident happiness in his presence, and her dissatisfaction at his absence.

"What do I expect?" she said. "Ivor is kind and pleasant, but he does not love me; *that* I know full well!"

Later in the afternoon, when the guests were beginning to disperse, and the sound of the waves came fuller and plainer through the open windows, everyone knew it was nearly full tide, and time for Siencyn and Gwen to take their departure. The money collected at the bidding was counted, and the bride was loudly congratulated upon the large amount.

"Thirty pounds—enough to set the young couple up in comfort!"

It was entrusted to Lallo's keeping, and later in the evening she handed it over with much pride to Hugh Morgan, who stood in the place of "banker" to the whole village.

A large party of the young people attended the happy couple to the shore, singing as they went an old part song of farewell greeting.

There was no way of reaching the boat that was to carry them to the Speedwell which danced and dipped in the bay, so Siencyn unceremoniously took off his shoes and stockings, and, hoisting his bride on his shoulders, waded

through the surf, amongst the shouts and laughter and boisterous "hwré's" of the company. They waited on the shore until the Speedwell was fairly under weigh, and with fluttering pennons and flags had disappeared round the horn of the bay.

All the evening, and late into the moonlight, the lads and lasses of the village kept up the festive character of the day, sitting about in knots on the rocks and cliffs, and of course singing to their hearts' content. Lallo alone seemed rather depressed as she led her pig home from a neighbour's stye, to which it had been banished for the day; he was now evidently in a hurry to get back to his own home, tugging violently at the string tied to his leg, which Lallo held. When he was safely housed, she stood somewhat tearfully thinking. Her life was a constant warfare with her pig, and either her voice or his, or both together, were generally to be heard. He had in every way disappointed her. She had meant him to be a fat and short pig; but instead of that he had grown long, and when he stood on his hind feet to argue with her, he was taller than the gate! She had had a board added to the top, but the pig had grown still longer, and was still able to put his head over the gate and vociferate his remonstrances.

"There, thou villain!" said Lallo, pouring a steaming bucketful of food into his trough; "hold thy tongue if thou canst."

"Oo'ee—oo'ee—oo'ee!" shrieked the pig, and

Lallo imitating his tones derisively, the noise was deafening. At last, retiring from the frequent fray, she threw herself down on the settle in the penisha, from which all the guests had departed, and where nothing but the remains of the feast were left.

"Yes," she mused, "it is just as well that Gwen is married; there will now be a man to manage him; he wants a firmer hand than mine —the villain! Ivor never managed him properly. Now I will take the money to the Mishteer."

She had no sooner appeared at her front door than the pig assailed her with a fresh burst of "Oo'ee—oo'ees!" and Lallo shook her fist at him.

"Devil!" she said; "but never mind, my boy, wait till the fifth of September."

A few days afterwards, when the evening shadows were falling, Gwladys took her way to the beach, again to fill her creel for Nance Owen. The sun was sinking behind the sea in a glory of purple and gold, making a crimson pathway, which broadened out at her feet. She stood and gazed over the rippling surface, wondering whether Ivor was out fishing this evening. Once or twice a little boat crossed the shining pathway like a grey moth, and she called to mind the happy hour she had spent with him on the moonlit bay. Would it ever happen again? Why did it seem so distant and so impossible? Is this his boat coming swiftly towards her? She

heard the grating of the prow on the sand, she saw a stalwart form, who leapt to the shore, and walked hurriedly towards her. For a moment her heart beat faster, but only for a moment, for she saw the broad shoulders and firm step belonged to Hugh Morgan.

"Gwladys!" he called, "is it thee? Luck follows me to-day. This morning brought me good news, and this evening brings me something better. Wilt come in my boat for a row? It is real summer on the water this evening."

"I would like it; but, indeed, Mishteer, I can't, for Nance Owen will want her laver weed, and my creel is full."

"Nance can wait," said Hugh, "and I will loosen thy creel." And he began to loosen the strap which crossed her bosom. She did not think of resisting; "it was the Mishteer!" And she quietly helped to slip her head out of the strap. It was not without some measure of gratified vanity that she felt herself singled out from all the other girls in the village by his kindness; and therefore it was with a little flutter of pride that she allowed herself to be lifted into the boat, though the glamour which had brooded over sea and sky during her row with Ivor was absent. It was evident to her that the Mishteer was pleased with her work, and perhaps with her industry; but that he loved her had never dawned upon her mind. She took her oar naturally—every man, woman, and child at Mwntseison being perfectly at home on the water—and they rowed straight

out towards the sunset, until the shore and village looked like a pretty vignette.

"There's nice, it is!" exclaimed Gwladys, "out here on the bay! 'Tis pity, indeed, that we can't come oftener!"

"And why not?" said Hugh, resting his oars on the rowlocks, and motioning to her to do the same.

"Wel indeed, Mishteer," she answered, laughing, "what would become of the work then? Who would make the sails?"

"Somebody else might," said Hugh; and he was silent for some time. "If I had my way," he said at last, "thou shouldst have a boat of thine own. Wouldst like that, lass?"

"Oh, anwl! What would I do with a boat—alone on the water? 'Twould soon become wearisome."

"But thou shouldst not be alone; I would row thee, Gwladys."

"Mishteer!" was all her answer.

"Yes, Gwladys. Hast not seen that I love thee? dost not know that all I have I would gladly give for thy love?"

His voice trembled, his eyes flashed, and the hand which held the oar in its nervous grasp shook like a leaf.

Gwladys was too astonished to think. She stooped over the soft, undulating water, pretending to look into its depths; and when at last his passionate words revealed plainly his meaning, she could only bend her head and ask timidly:

"Me?"

"Yes, thee," said Hugh. "Canst not understand that my happiness is in thine hands?"

Gwladys clasped her hands. "Oh, Mishteer!" she said, "I don't understand your words, or what you want of me."

"I want thee, Gwladys, to come and be the brightness of my home, the idol of my love—to be my wife, lass!"

Gwladys covered her face with her hands to hide her mingled feelings of astonishment and fright.

"It was the Mishteer!—he who had been mainstay and protector to her mother and herself ever since her father's death—to whom their cottage belonged—to whom they owed a year's rent—who had, in fact, loaded them with kindnesses and brightened their lives. And it was he who now desired to confer upon her this great honour. To be the Mishteer's wife!—she, a girl of eighteen, to be raised over all the other girls of the village; to own his house, his riches, and (above all) his heart! It was too wonderful for her to realize! But why—oh! why did not Ivor love her like this?"

All this flashed through her mind while she covered her face. Hugh came nearer, and, gently trying to draw away her hands, spoke again (and his voice was trembling and husky):

"Thou canst not love me! Tell me, Gwladys—hast any other lover?"

"No, no!" said the girl—"indeed, no! No-

body loves me! But, Mishteer—you are mistaken; you cannot care for me—a poor girl, a fisherman's daughter, the humblest and poorest of your work-people!"

"I love thee," he said, taking both her hands in his; "and I am content that it should be all on my side at first—only at first, Gwladys—for my deep love for thee must in time awaken the same in thine heart for me. I know thou canst not love me now—I am so much older than thee. I cannot expect thee yet to care for a great rough fellow like me—but marry me, and I will change thy coldness to love! Believe me! Wilt try me, lass?"

Gwladys was trembling all over as she answered, "I cannot, Mishteer; oh! indeed I cannot!"

"Why not?"

"Because I am frightened and surprised."

"Dost dislike me then?"

"Oh, no! indeed, indeed we all love you; I love you Mishteer, but not—not as a girl ought to love her—lover."

"Say husband, Gwladys."

"Well, her husband."

"But I am satisfied to wait for that love. Wilt have me, girl?"

"Oh! Mishteer, we have drifted far out to sea; let us turn back; let me go home to mother—give me time."

"Of course!" said Hugh, beginning to use his oar again; "let us go back. I will not take

thine answer here alone on the sea—I ought not to have asked thee; but to-morrow, Gwladys, to-morrow evening at this time, I will come to thee for my answer."

"Yes," whispered the girl, as she bent with a will to her oar.

The tide had turned, and the long billowy swells carried them swiftly back towards the land; a belated seagull floated by them, a sound of singing came fitfully on the breeze from the shore.

"They are practising the anthem at Brynseion Chapel," said the girl, anxious to change the conversation; "they will wonder where I am."

"And I," said Hugh, "have been absent twice lately. I will go there at once, and make it all right for thee; thou wouldst like to go home to thy mother?"

"Yes," was all she said.

When they reached the shore Hugh once more took her in his arms to lift her from the boat, and placing her gently on the sands, he grasped her hand, and for a moment retained it in his own.

"At least wilt not deceive me, lass?"

"Deceive you, Mishteer! Oh! no, indeed; you are the Mishteer, and I am only Gwladys Price, but I never could break my word."

"Must I wait longer for the kiss that I am longing for?" he said.

She bent her head and made no answer; but she did not run away, and Hugh, gently drawing

her towards him, imprinted a passionate kiss on her full red lips.

"Shall I come with thee, or wilt go alone?"

"I would rather go alone," said Gwladys, and she left him pulling his boat up the little strand.

Her mind was full of confused emotions—astonishment, pride, admiration for the man whom she considered so much above her, wonder why the events of the night left her so dissatisfied; and above all, her heart was sore with longing for Ivor's love! She dropped her creel of laverweed at Nance Owen's door, and as she reached the village road, with every step her heart asked the weary question, "Why—why is it not Ivor?"

Darkness had fallen, and the moon, hidden by a bank of clouds, shed no light on the scene; but every step of the road was familiar to Gwladys. She moved aside to make room for a rumbling car which came noisily down the hill, its occupants talking loudly, and—surely one of the voices was Ivor's! There were three sitting close together on the board which did duty for a seat, the driver and Ivor, and between them a girl, around whom the latter's arm was thrown, and who seemed content with his protection. She knew Ivor had been absent from the village since the previous day, for he had accompanied the delayed sails in the waggon to their destination on Aberython quay; and from there he was now returning rather hurriedly, for the purpose of consulting the Mishteer on some matter of

business which had cropped up at the little town. He was bringing with him a cousin, who was to stay some weeks at his lodgings for change of air; she was a delicate girl, far gone in consumption, and his kindly thought had suggested a short sojourn at Mwntseison. The drive had shaken her much, and he had held her up with his strong arm, until he had lifted her safely out of the car, and placed her under his landlady's care.

After a hasty visit to Hugh Morgan he returned the same night to Aberython.

A spasm of jealousy was added to the dull aching already filling Gwladys' heart, and as she plodded on up the hill, she called herself to task, and blamed herself for her misery.

"Oh! if mother knew," she said, "that her little daughter had been so bold and so foolish as to give her heart to a man who had never asked for it, what would she say? What did she say about Gwen? 'When a girl shows her love too plainly, a wise man draws back!' Have I shown my love to Ivor? and is he drawing back because of that? I will be more careful—and I don't love him! to-night I feel I hate him! And who was that bold girl, I wonder, who sat with him? not Madlen, nor Shân, nor Ana! But why do I care?"

"Oh, mother, I am tired!" she added, as she entered the house, and threw herself wearily on the settle.

Her mother looked at her with surprise, for

the words, "I am tired, mother!" had been left behind with her childish frocks and bare feet.

"Come to supper, merch i. Where hast been?"

"On the shore and the water," said Gwladys, in a listless tone. "Mother, I have something wonderful to tell thee!"

CHAPTER V.

TRAETH-Y-DARAN.

THE business which called Ivor Parry to Aberython had proved more wearily slow in its progress than is usual, even in that land where to attend to a thing at once, and to compass its completion without delay, is considered not only unnecessarily flurrying, but also scarcely dignified; so a whole week went by before he returned to Mwntseison.

He had never been so long absent before, and was returning one evening in the following week with a fund of bright, fresh interest in his work in the old sail-shed. He was in good spirits, having finished the Mishteer's work satisfactorily, and was bringing with him an order for new sails for the Lapwing; and besides all this, did not his way lie down the hill past Gwladys' cottage? and had he not found an excuse for going in as he passed?

And then he fell to wondering what Hugh Morgan meant when he had said good-bye to him with the words, "I will have something to tell thee on thy return." What was it? Ivor wondered.

"Something pleasant, I know, by the twinkle in his eye; perhaps an order for the new schooner at Caer Madoc!" And as he trudged down the hill, his thumbs in his armholes, he began to sing lustily one of the old ballads always floating about in the country air:—

"In a garden of flowers I roamed one day,
And I said, I will find me a posy gay;
I passed the red roses and lilies so fair—
And a handful of nettles I gathered there!"

"Twt, twt!" he said, stopping suddenly; "there's a grumbling song I've got hold of this fine evening." And he began again in another key, and filled the summer air with melody:—

"Alone on the shore of the stormy bay
A snow-white sea-gull stands;
And she preens her feathers damp with spray
On the wet and shining sands.

"Perhaps 'tis a maiden who stands to-day
All wet in a rain of tears;
And perhaps she will weep by that stormy bay,
Through all the coming years!"

"Well, tan i marw! That's not much better," he said. "What's the matter with the man?" And reaching Nani Price's cottage, he stooped his head, and entered the low doorway. "Hello, Nani!" he called, and she rose from the dark chimney corner.

"Wel, wyr!* Ivor, thy voice came in at

* Well, indeed.

the door before thee! I am glad to see thee back again. And what dost think of Aberython?"

"Oh, 'tis very well," answered Ivor. "There's a fine street going down to the quay, and shops all the way on both sides," and he thought joyfully of the pretty ribbon he had safe in his pocket for Gwladys. "But where's Gwladys?" he asked, looking round; "not come home from the sailshed yet?"

"Well, she's not been there to-day; she's gone to Mari Vone's with patterns of wool for the weaving. Thou'st come to wish her joy, no doubt, like all the rest?"

"Wish her joy! of what?" said Ivor, sitting down on the end of the spinning-wheel bench. There was a curious darkening of the sunshine at the doorway and a confused rushing in his head which made him glad to sit down.

"Hast not heard the news, then?" said Nani. "Why, she's going to be married to the Mishteer!" And the good woman, for once forgetting everything but her own satisfaction, in the information she had to impart, was blind to the change in Ivor's face.

"To be married to the Mishteer! Gwladys, who had filled his thoughts and heart for so long —yes, ever since he could remember!" And the whole universe was shattered, as far as Ivor Parry was concerned; but he sat still and made no sign, for always the most agonising points of life are

the most silent. When at last the bitter tale was all told he rose slowly.

"There's news I've given thee," said Nani, stopping for breath.

"News, indeed!" said Ivor; "but I must go. Well, 'wish her joy' for me, Nani," and out again to the June evening Ivor went, bruised, wounded, bleeding, but fighting bravely with his sorrow, and sustained by his pride. Not for worlds would he—Ivor Parry, the cheeriest and bravest bachgen in the village—let it be seen that he was sorely wounded; and he resumed his old attitude with his thumbs in his armholes, and struck up another verse of his disconnected ballad, though how he managed it he never afterwards could understand. With head erect, and with many improvised turns and grace notes, he sang, as he went his way down the road:

"O gwae fi, and woe is me!
And my heart is full of pain;
For the ship that sailed across the sea
Will never come back again!"

On reaching his lodgings he was even more lively than usual, making his cousin laugh at his merry sallies, and hearing his own voice as if it had been a stranger's. He even made a show of enjoying his tea; but after it was over he went out, and, leaving the sail-shed behind him, turned his face towards the cliffs. Slipping down through the broom bushes, he made his way by an unfrequented sheep path to the beach below,

and, crossing the shore, reached the south end of the harbour. The turmoil of thoughts within him seemed to urge him forwards, and every step he took strengthened the only determination he could evolve out of the chaos of misery in his heart. He must see Gwladys, must hear his doom from her own lips! The south end of the shore was less frequented than the other. The crags were higher and more frowning here, the shadows were deeper, the sands were seldom trodden, and the sea seldom ruffled by oar or sail; but here in the deep shadows the laver weed grew thickest, and here Gwladys might come to fill her creel as usual, "unless, indeed," thought Ivor, "she might to-night be roaming over the cliffs with Hugh Morgan, and so forget her creel and Nance Owen." The thought was so bitter that he groaned aloud.

Gwladys had returned home a few minutes after he had left the house, even soon enough to hear an echo of his voice as he trolled out the well-known ballad. Her mother met her with a happy, smiling face.

"Merch fâch i!" she said, as she drew the back of her fingers caressingly over the girl's cheek, where the rich colour had paled a little. Her heart was full of gratitude to the daughter whose marriage promised to bring so much comfort and freedom from care into her life. "Ivor Parry has been here to 'wish thee joy,'" she said; and Gwladys' heart throbbed painfully.

"There's a merry man he is," continued Nani,

as she clattered the tea-cups on the little round table; "singing he was when he came in, and singing again when he went out."

In the gloom of the cottage she had not noticed the pallor that overspread his face upon receiving her news, neither did she now notice her daughter's preoccupied silence. It was very evident that her elation of spirits had for the time smothered Nani's usual tender thoughtfulness for others.

"Yes, I thought 'twas his voice," said Gwladys at last. "What did he say, mother?"

"Oh, well, he was very glad. 'There's good news, indeed!' sez he, and 'wish her joy for me, Nani.' Hast settled which stripe thee'lt have in thy petticoat, lass? What did Mari Vone say?"

"Oh, she liked best the blue. I don't care which; you can settle it, mother."

"Don't care!" said Nani, raising her hands in astonishment. "Well, in my deed, thou art an odd girl in some things! Going to be married to the Mishteer, and not care whether thy stripes are to be red or blue! If it had been to a common man like Dyc Pentraeth or Ivor Parry, it would be no 'otts' perhaps—but to the Mishteer, the owner of half the village, so rich, and so handsome, and with his achan * going back I don't know where! A scarlet stripe it shall be, then; and I wish there was a brighter

* Pedigree.

colour!" and she whisked the crock of "mash," which she was warming for her ailing cow, off its hook over the fire with such a swing of triumph that some of its contents was spilt on the hearth, and Gwladys looked after her with a smile, half-sad, half-amused.

"Mother fâch,* I have made her life happy, whatever!" she said, and standing there in the twilight, with the skeins of bright wool hanging from her unconscious fingers, she fell into a deep reverie. "Is this how every girl feels when she is going to be married?" and then a silence. "Wish her joy for me!" Well, what more could she expect from any man who heard of her approaching marriage? The curves of the mobile mouth fell, and the brown eyes became suffused with tears. Both signs of sadness, however, were chased away as she heard a manly footstep at the door, and Hugh Morgan entered the cottage. At the same moment Nani returned from the cowshed, so, according to Welsh custom, Hugh's manner was jovial and friendly only, nothing warmer being considered decorous in the presence of a third person, more especially that of a future mother-in-law.

"Well, are you here, little people? Coming in from the sunset, I can't see you yet."

"We are here all right, Mishteer, and glad to see you. Come in," said Nani, as she dusted a chair with her apron.

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* Little mother.

"I just came in to say I am going to Abersethin to-night on business, so I sha'n't be able to bring the new glee to show thee, Gwladys. How does the world go with thee to-night, Nani?"

"Right well, Mishteer. Sit down, sit down."

"I must not stay long," said Hugh, and Nani considerately made her sick cow an excuse for pottering in and out of the house. She remembered the old saying, "I had better go," said the crow, "when the dove begins to coo!" When she had left the house, Hugh's manner changed at once.

"How is my darling?" he said, taking the listless fingers which held the red and blue skeins; "and what are these pretty things? Aha! now I'll warrant they are for some new clothes for thy wedding," and he drew the blushing girl towards him. "The old sail-shed is dull without thee, lass. When will my wild sea-bird get over her shyness?"

"Well, I'm coming to-morrow, whatever, Mishteer," said Gwladys.

"Halt, halt!" said Hugh, laughing; "you must drop that word now. Mishteer, indeed! Remember I will fine thee a kiss for every time thou call'st me that!"

"I will try, indeed; but 'twill be hard at first."

"Oh, I won't be very angry if thou fail'st to remember sometimes," answered Hugh, and, as Nani's shadow darkened the door again, he re-

turned to his less warm, but still cordial, manner, and soon rose to go.

"Nos da to you both!" he said, and, with a loving look towards Gwladys, which he was careful Nani should not see, he left the house.

Meanwhile Ivor had waited on the darkened shore until the sun had long set, and the moon, now at her full, looked down upon the shimmering bay.

The tide had turned, and still Gwladys had not come; and while he waited there in the shadow of the cliff, he pondered bitterly on Nani's words, and sought in vain for any loophole for hope that the news was not true, and that he should yet find Gwladys free and unfettered.

"Fool! fool!" he said; "to think I could safely loiter on the path of love! to see the answer to my own heart gradually coming into those brown eyes! That's what I waited for; but caton pawb! how could I expect such happiness? I have never seen a sign of that love in her which fills my heart. Sometimes, indeed,"—and his troubled face took a tender, far-away look—"sometimes I have seen her eyes droop, and her blushes come when I have spoken to her, and then I thought perhaps she cared a little for me, for she is not like some girls—Gwen or Ana, now. 'Twas not far to seek for their smiles—no, nor their kisses either! But Gwladys! I was afraid even to touch her, lest she should fly away like a bird!" and he groaned aloud in his trouble, and confessed to himself

that the darkest and direst misfortune that could befall him was casting its shadow on his path —nay, had already caught and overwhelmed him. Had his rival been anyone else, he could have fought against his fate—yes, fought, and perhaps conquered! But the Mishteer! his friend! his master! the man whom, of all others, he held in such high esteem. No! the thought was unbearable. Life was not made to hold such bitterness for him! But, alas! life does hold out to us sometimes a cup of so much bitterness that imagination even would hesitate to picture it as a possible event in our experience. We drink it to the dregs, and we survive it.

A step on the pebbles, and Gwladys had at last appeared, and Ivor watched her as she picked her way between the boulders, unconscious of his presence. Oh, how lovely she looked, her brown hair tossed by the soft night breeze, the moon shining full upon the clear brown eyes, and the coral of her lips! and what the moonlight failed to reveal was only too plainly pictured on his memory. She held her two hands on her bosom, grasping the strap of her creel, and she rather bent her head over them as she drew near. She did not see Ivor until she was close upon him, and for a moment stood perfectly still.

"Gwladys!" was all he could say at first, and his voice was so altered, so hoarse, that she stood up straight before him, and looked in as-

tonishment in his face, while she answered, in a startled tone:

"Ivor Parry! it is thee, indeed? Ach y fi! I was not expecting to see thee; but I'm not surprised, though, 'tis such a beautiful night."

Before she had finished speaking, Ivor had regained his composure.

"Yes, tis a fine night," he said; "but 'twas not *that* made me come out. I have been at thy mother's on my way home from Aberython, and I—I——" and he lifted his hat and pushed his fingers through his hair, which was damp and clammy.

"Yes, indeed," said Gwladys, beginning to lose her own calmness. "She gave me thy message. I was not long after thee, for I heard thee singing. I thank thee for thy good wishes."

"I thought, perhaps, it was not true," said Ivor, and his voice shook a little.

Gwladys was silent for a moment, during which a flood of new emotions surged through her whole being, so that her heart beat fast, her limbs trembled, and the whole world seemed to take a new shape before her. Ivor's altered manner, his hoarse voice, the nervous trembling of the hands which he held out towards her, all told the tale which he had withheld so long, and, with a sudden flash of intuition which comes in a great crisis, his love and misery were all revealed to her; and alas! her love for him! She could not do otherwise than place her hands in those which were stretched out so eagerly to-

wards her; but while she did so, her head drooped, and her tears fell like rain.

"'Tis true," she said at last, "'tis true, Ivor."

"Didst not know, Gwladys, that I loved thee, that every hair of thine head was precious to me?"

Many years passed over Ivor's head after that night, but he never forgot the cry with which she heard his words.

"Oh, Ivor! what is this thou art telling me?" and sitting down on the upturned creel which had slipped from her shoulders, she swayed backwards and forwards, endeavouring to smother the sobs which shook her frame. In truth, it was only the bursting of the floodgates, which she had kept closed by a strong effort of will ever since she had made her final promise to Hugh Morgan. The discovery of Ivor's love had been too much for her overstrained nerves, and now, with the abandon of a child, she sat on her creel and cried bitterly. Ivor seated himself on a rock beside her, his worst fears confirmed, and at last, when the sobbing girl had a little regained composure, took her hand and said:

"Didst not know that for long years I have loved thee?—for ever, I think!"

"I did not know—no, indeed!" said the girl.

"If thou hadst known it, lass, what wouldst thou have done?"

She did not answer at once, but continued to

rock herself backwards and forwards, and even to moan a little.

"Tell me, Gwladys," Ivor said again; and at last her answer came in clear, firm tones:

"Whatever thou wouldst, Ivor."

"Wouldst have married Hugh Morgan?"

"Oh, never, never! But now I must. Beth na'i? beth na'i?" *

"No, no, lass, it must not be—shall not be! I have hungered too much for thy love to let it slip from me now. 'Tis not too late! I will go to Hugh Morgan and tell him all. Thou know'st him, Gwladys—a man who never did a mean thing—a man who would tear out his heart sooner than injure his friend! I will go to him, and tell him, 'Gwladys' love is mine—not thine—and, by heaven! thou shalt not have her!'"

His voice was hoarse with eagerness, and the hand that held hers trembled with excitement.

But Gwladys only drew her hand away, and said:

"'Tis too late, Ivor. I have promised the Mishteer, and our banns have been called once!"

At the mention of the word "banns," Ivor made a gesture of despair. Here, indeed, was the downfall to all his reviving hopes—a bar across his path only one degree less insuperable than death itself—for though to a Welshman scarcely any obstacle seems insurmountable,

* "What shall I do?"

scarcely any stratagem dishonourable in the course of his impetuous love-making, yet marriage and all connected with it holds the high place in his reverence, which it seems to have lost in many nations.

It is true that morality amongst the unmarried peasantry lays itself open to reproach; but a lapse from the paths of the strictest virtue after marriage is always looked upon as an unpardonable disgrace.

The knowledge, therefore, that Hugh Morgan's banns were published crushed every hope that had begun to spring up anew within Ivor's breast.

"Mawredd anwl! * 'tis impossible!" he cried; "so soon! Gwladys, say it is not true, or thou wilt kill me—an' 'tis the best thing thou canst do for me, for now I see, indeed, that thou art gone from me for ever! Hugh Morgan has not loitered, whatever! Only one short week I was away, and in that time another man has won thee, and thy banns are out!"

She made no answer, but sat with her face buried in her hands.

"Thou art crying, lass; is it pity for me?"

"Yes," she sobbed, "and—and for me!"

"Didst love me, then, all the time, f'anwylyd? Tell me; I have a right to know."

He had drawn her close to his side, and she

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* Good God!

felt his breath on her hair as he continued to plead—

"Say it, Gwladys—only once—only to-night!"

Poor Gwladys! The glamour of the love she had thirsted for was upon her in all its fulness—was wrapping her in its folds. Its strength subdued her; she forgot her scruples, and stifled the whispers of her usually tender conscience, and, yielding to Ivor's pleadings and her own impulsive, passionate nature, let her lover draw from her the truth, which she had hitherto scarcely confessed to herself.

"Yes—yes; I have loved thee always."

"And will love me for ever?—whisper it, f'anwylyd," said Ivor.

"No, I must not say that; but thou knowst it all. Oh! beth na'i, beth na'i?"

A step on the shingle disturbed them.

"Only Sianco fetching his crab-pots; but here is my boat. Let us go to Traeth-y-daran, where the sand is never trodden; there we shall be alone, for I tell thee, Gwladys, this night is mine and thine—*nothing* shall tear it from us!"

He drew the boat to the side of the rock and once again Gwladys and he were out together on the moonlit bay. It was so calm that nothing could be heard but the creaking of the oars in the rowlocks and the dripping of the water from the blades. Neither spoke until reaching Traeth-y-daran, the boat glided in between the

rocks, and they landed on the shore which lay lonely and peaceful in a flood of moonlight.

"Here is a seat for thee, love, and one for me beside thee close. Oh, yes; I said this night was made for thee and me! For a few hours let us put everything else away from us, Gwladys, and talk and think and feel nothing —nothing but our love for each other. I will have it so!" he said almost fiercely. "To-night is for happiness—to-morrow is for—?. Tell me, lass, dost remember our last row on the bay?"

"Yes, I have had it in my thoughts often, and in my heart always," said Gwladys.

"Hast indeed?" said Ivor; "didst feel my kiss on thy hair?"

"I felt it," she answered, with head drooping and burning cheeks; "but I did not think it meant anything—indeed I didn't, Ivor!" and she looked up pleadingly into his face.

"No, a fool I was! I hid it all, thinking to win thy love gradually and then to tell thee! I thought I would guard thee so well that no other man could approach thee unknown to me, and then I would speak to thee at once. Oh, what a fool I was! and now——"

"And now?" repeated Gwladys tearfully; and a silence fell upon them as they both thought of "what might have been!" Into the girl's dream there came a shadow from the future—a picture of Hugh Morgan bending over her as she sat at work in his house on the hillside. It was a

momentary glimpse and she shuddered as it crossed her mind.

"Art cold, f'anwylyd?"

"No, no," she answered; "on this May night who would be cold? I am warm, Ivor; 'tis the future makes me shiver——"

"Hush!" he said, "don't speak about that; there is no law in earth or heaven that can part us, if only thou wilt let me go to Hugh Morgan and ask him to free thee from thy promise——"

"But the banns, Ivor? Oh, no; 'tis impossible to bring this shame upon the Mishteer's name. And my mother—she would break her heart! No, no; 'tis too plain we must part. Will God give me strength, I wonder? Beth na'i? beth na'i?"

For some time Ivor, carried away by the new-born happiness of knowing he had her love, endeavoured to shake her determination; but here she was firm, in spite of the weakness with which she had allowed herself to be swayed by the strong tide of love, which had overwhelmed her on discovering Ivor's feelings towards her.

There were long pauses in their talk when the sea seemed to add its sweet whispers of entreaty to his pleading, until at last as the night wore on there came a little pleading into Gwladys' voice also—

"Oh! Ivor, do not tempt me; I have done wrong to come here, I ought to have said 'nos da' and passed straight home—I am like the

seaweed, tossed hither and thither by the fierce waves, but still fastened to the rock, and so am I bound to the Mishteer. Only *that* one thing is certain in all this sea of trouble. O gwae fi! beth na'i? Let me go, lad! Thou wouldst always help me when I was a child; everywhere I was safe and strong, if thou wert there. And now, Ivor, help me, for the storm is upon me!"

"I cannot, Gwladys—I cannot, indeed! I seek for the strength within me, and I do not find it; but so far I can do, whatever—I will stand out of thy way and let thee pass on to—the Mishteer."

Gwladys, scarce knowing whether this made her more or less miserable, but taking his words somewhat in a literal meaning, began to move a little towards the boat.

"Stop, stop, f'anwylyd!" said Ivor, "not to-night will I stand aside—not to-night will I part with thee! I have said, and I swear it again, to-night thou art mine! and my fine promises do not begin till to-morrow."

He drew her again closer to him—and again they fell into a long silence.

"Gwladys," said Ivor at last, "wilt tell me what have thy thoughts been?"

"The same as thine, I do believe, Ivor," said the girl, in a broken voice. "Our happiness would be to be together, but our duty bids us part. I cannot break my promise to the Mishteer. Our banns are called! I am half mar-

ried to him! I ought not to be here; I am a wicked girl. Why, why has he set his love upon me? I have promised to marry him, and I will keep my word though my heart should break."

Ivor did not speak, he was struggling with a trial which had come upon him unexpectedly and unprepared for. Every fibre of his being was shaken by the shattering of his fondest dreams—the love which he had cherished for years, and for which he had built such fair palaces of hope! Was it now to be stifled and put out of sight for ever? to be cast under the feet of another man, who would walk over it with joy and happiness on his face, unconscious of the sacrifice which his friend was making for him!

For some time they sat thus suffering together, both brooding on the untoward events which had separated them, and on the bitter trial which lay before them.

It was Gwladys who spoke first.

"See how the moon has travelled, Ivor; she is near her setting; the dawn is not far off. Let us go. What will my mother think?"

"She will think thou art staying with Nance Owen, as thou often hast before. Dost see that bright star? We will wait until it sets! So short a time for happiness out of all our long lives, Gwladys!"

"The good God will not grudge it us!" she whispered.

"When that star sinks down behind the sea

I will loosen my hold of thee, f'anwylyd; but until then thou art mine—and mine only! We are alone in the world—two ships which have sailed together half-way across the ocean, and now must separate for ever!"

Gwladys' long-drawn sobs had subsided, and left only a little catch in her breath, which Ivor heard with yearning tenderness.

"'Tis hard for us both, love; but God grant thee comfort as the years go by. Thou wilt, perhaps, gain peace, and learn to forget the past."

"Never, never!" said the girl. "Calm and peace! where are they coming from, Ivor? Oh, never, never!"

"'Tis a cruel thing, this life which is before us, lass. If I had known that Hugh had set his love on thee, I might have strangled mine at its birth, even though I had killed myself in doing so; but now, 'tis too late, indeed!"

"God knows about it, whatever," said Gwladys between her sobs.

"Dost think, indeed!" was all Ivor's answer.

Both had their eyes fixed upon the star, which hung like a jewel in the sky; it was already losing some of its brilliancy in the haze which bordered the horizon.

"See, Ivor, it is going!" And she shuddered.

"Not yet, f'anwylyd!" he replied; and for a few minutes they watched in silence as one watches at a death-bed.

"Our happiness draws near its last moment," he said at last; and they both stood up together, with their eyes fixed on the star, which now drew close to the horizon.

"Repeat those words, Gwladys, 'I love thee, I love thee, Ivor!'"

And with whispering, trembling breath she obeyed.

The star had reached the line of the sea; and, with a simultaneous impulse, they turned to each other, and their lips met in a long, passionate kiss, and it was with a sudden gasp that Ivor opened his arms, leaving Gwladys standing alone on the edge of the wave. He said not another word, but drawing his boat higher up the strand, he lifted her gently over the surf. She felt the nervous trembling of his strong arms as he longed to press her to his heart; but he resisted the impulse, and in another minute they were both rowing silently away from the Traeth-y-daran.

Before they reached Mwntseison Ivor spoke.

"Wilt land here?" he said, pointing to a narrow creek between the cliffs, where a little stream came trickling down from the hills above.

"Yes," was all she could say in reply; and once more Ivor lifted her over the surf, and placed her on the tiny beach. He sprang back into his boat as if afraid to trust himself near her.

"Fforwel!" he said, in a hard, dry voice.

"Fforwel!" answered Gwladys. And with eyes fixed upon each other they separated, every

wave of the ebbing tide increasing the distance between them.

As soon as Ivor had passed the point of rocks which enclosed the little creek, he set to with hard rowing to reach the further end of the harbour, passing by Mwntseison still asleep. His face was white and hard set, his hair hung in damp clumps on his forehead, and as he rowed his pale face wore an expression of sullen anger, —in truth, an expression very foreign to his general disposition. Having reached the southern side where the cliffs towered higher and more frowning from the sea, where the fishing boats never came, he was as much alone as if he had been off some far desert island. With an angry motion he flung both the oars from him, rattling noisily as they fell, and sitting moodily in the stern he gave himself up to his bitter reflections. He did not feel the cool morning breezes on his damp face, nor hear the lapping of the water under the keel of his boat as it rose and fell on the gentle swells; all so calm and peaceful around him, and he so full of tumult within! It was just the hour between the dark and the dawn; the sea was of the rough grey of a herring's back, melting into the soft white of the horizon. The gurgle of the fish coming up to the surface for a breath of air was distinctly audible in the silence, and as the flush of the dawn rose higher behind the hills, all sorts of mysterious sounds awoke round the little boat. The hoarse cry of an invisible puffin came over

the waters—a soft whispering of the morning breeze filled the air, the strangely human cries of the young seals which still haunt the caves in the cliffs of Mwntseison, all fell unheeded on Ivor's ear. He was fighting with an emotion which he had never known before—jealousy of Hugh Morgan! a blind, unreasoning anger; and underlying it, a desperate conviction that in the end he should submit to his fate—for to fight against the Mishteer was as impossible to him—as contrary to his nature—as it would have been to commit a crime! And it was rebellion against this iron destiny which filled his heart with impotent anger. From the moment when he had caught the last glimpse of Gwladys standing solitary on the shore of the creek, he had known how it would be with him—how strong and unbending were the bonds which compelled him to give his best to his friend.

"As for her," he thought, "she would forget him, would soon learn to be content with her lot—yes, more than content—for no woman could be loved by Hugh and not love him in return! *That* he never doubted; but for himself?" Self-sacrifice as an abstract idea had never dawned upon him. He was but an untaught man, whose only education had been what a tender nature and a simple country life had brought him; but one thing was plain to him, he must efface himself, and Hugh Morgan must have his way!

Meanwhile Gwladys remained motionless,

watching the little boat, until, a mere speck, it rounded a ridge of rocks which jutted out into the bay, and behind which lay Mwntseison; then she dragged her weary steps up the steep cliff from the shore, following a shepherd's path through the broom and heather bushes, till she reached the top of the hill, where she sat down to watch the rising sun. Behind her lay the sea, with its soft sighings and tender whisperings, the old world of her happiness and her youth—and Ivor! before her lay the cold east, from whose mysterious bosom the dawn was breaking, and as she watched, the sun rose and tipped each little blade and leaf with gold. Here, kneeling between the broom bushes, while the morning breeze ruffled her hair, alone on the hillside, she struggled in an agony of tears and supplications to put away from her the memory of the past night, with its golden moon of love and its bitter waves of sorrow—and to turn her face towards that path of duty which lay before her. At another time how she would have delighted in the sounds and sights around her! the dew-drops glistening on the sea-pinks, the gossamer webs stretched like frosted silver from bush to bush, the rabbits peeping out of their burrows, the shepherd awakening his flock, the sea-gulls sailing high above the hill top, where the little sea-crows were beginning the day with a squabble; but it was all lost upon Gwladys, who reached her mother's house while the village was still sleeping under the early morning sun.

There was only the wooden bolt to push back, and she knew the simple trick by which it was reached from the outside.

"Why! thou hast risen early," said her mother, as she saw her enter. "What! is Nance Owen up so early?"

"I have not been there!"

There was something in the girl's voice which startled her mother.

"Where, then?" she cried, sitting up in bed.

"With Ivor Parry out on the bay! Mother, it will never happen again—we had something to say to each other—it is passed—you must forget it, mother, as I shall—but I wanted to tell you——"

Her mother, breathless and frightened, stared at the girl, who, pale and dry-eyed, began to set about her household duties. Whether she understood what that "something" had been which had been spoken at Traeth-y-daran, she never disclosed; but she opened her arms and drew Gwladys towards her, "Calon fâch!" * was all she said as she pressed the girl to her heart.

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* Dear heart.

CHAPTER VI.

CHANGES.

THE work in the sail-shed went on as usual in the following week—the same hum of voices, the same chatter and laughter amongst the women. The only difference was that Ivor Parry looked ill and worn.

"He had been out fishing one night," so ran the story, "and returning in the early morning had slipped as he jumped from his boat, and falling on a slippery rock had had what 'n'wncwl Jos called 'a nasty old shake.' When asked about it, he had treated it with indifference, saying, 'I did slip and twisted my back a little; but, caton pawb! what is that?' And he had been as busy as ever at his work, scoffing at any suggestions of sympathy."

Gwladys, at the further end of the long shed, worked quietly at her canvas, with drooping eyelids and flushed cheeks. She knew she was an object of interest to those around her, and was thankful to remember that no one knew anything about her love for Ivor. She heard the comments upon his fall and his altered appear-

ance with a strange callousness which frightened her. Her heart was like a stone within her; she never turned her eyes towards the other end of the shed where the harder and heavier part of the work was carried on by the men. Fortunately for her, it is not considered etiquette in Wales for a lover to pay marked attentions to his betrothed in public, so she was spared the pain of conversing with Hugh in Ivor's presence, except upon the ordinary topics connected with the work. But although Hugh adhered to the usual fashion of ignoring his sweetheart's presence before the curious eyes of the gossips, he yet held his head more proudly than ever. There was a light in his eyes and a smile on his lips which added a fresh charm to his handsome face; and as he gave directions to his work-people, there was a ring of happiness in his voice which plainly told its own tale. One thing troubled him—Ivor was suffering! Of that he was sure. And as it drew near closing time, he spoke to his friend words of serious advice and of kindly sympathy; for Hugh could be as tender as a woman in spite of his burly frame.

"Look here, 'mach-geni!"* he said, sitting on a bale in front of Ivor; "this will never do. Every hour thou art getting to look paler and thinner; thou must stop in bed to-morrow, and I'll send to Abersethin for Dr. Hughes. I'm

* My boy!

afraid thou hast got more of a wrench than thou knowest of."

"Not a bit," laughed Ivor; but his laugh had not its usual light-heartedness. "I know exactly what the wrench was—it hurt a good deal; but dost think I'm going to stop in bed and send for a doctor? I never did such a thing in my life! Twt, twt, 'twill be all right if thou wilt let me alone, and not bother me about my looks.

Hugh had never known him so irritable before, and he looked at him critically as he left him.

"Well, if thou won't listen to advice, I can't help thee."

"What about that order for the Sea Nymph?" Ivor called after him.

Hugh shook his head. "I cannot take it," he said; "the time is too short. Send them to Rees of Carnarfon; it will be quite as convenient for the owners, and more so for me," and he returned slowly towards Ivor. "I am going to be married next week," he said; "come down this evening, lad, and I'll tell thee all about it. Thou must sprack up, and arrange some jollification for the people. We'll have two days' holidays, and I'll leave all the fun in thine hands, Ivor, only come to me for the money. I know I can trust thee to manage it all. Dost hear, man? Why, what's the matter with thee? Dr. Hughes shall see thee to-night, or my name's not Hugh Morgan."

"'Twas only a wrench," said Ivor; "it's all over, and I'll see to the bonfires and shooting."

"Right," said Hugh; but he shook his head as he went away.

Later on in the evening, as Madlen was preparing supper under the big open chimney in the kitchen, a step disturbed her.

"Who's that?" she said snappishly, for the uwd* was at the point of boiling. "Oh, Ivor Parry!"

"Yes," he answered, walking in unceremoniously. "I wanted to see the Mishteer."

"Wel wyr! didst expect to see him here? He is up with Gwladys Price, of course. Howyer bach!† There's going to be changes! I tell thee, Ivor Parry, he's perfectly mad about the girl. Wel, dwla dwl yw dwl hên!"‡

"Will he come to his supper?"

"Most likely not; not even potatoes and buttermilk will bring him home now."

But her prognostications were false to-night, for at that moment Hugh entered, bright and breezy.

"Hello, Ivor! just in time for supper, 'machgeni; sit down. Art better?"

"Oh, all right," he said, sitting down to the table, on which Madlen placed the smoking "uwd" with a large jug of milk. In every

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* Porridge.

† Dear people! (an exclamation).

‡ "There is no fool like an old fool!"

other cottage in Mwntseison wooden bowls and wooden spoons would have been used, but the Mishteer's table was graced by blue-rimmed basins and silver spoons.

"I wanted to see thee, Ivor; we've not had a talk for some time."

"No, I have been too busy."

"And so have I, in my deed," said Hugh. "What between the torn sails of the Albatross —the new boat which is building for me—and a few new things I am getting for my house—well, the time has seemed to fly. What dost think of the new 'coffor' I have bought for Gwladys?" and he opened with pride the doors of a handsome oak wardrobe. "The best piece of work John 'Saer' * has ever done, I think." The shelves inside were well filled with stores of snowy napery, sheets, and table-cloths, etc., luxuries little known in Mwntseison. "And these drawers at the bottom to keep her clothes! Mari Vone has seen to it all for me."

"A splendid coffor, indeed," said Ivor; "and John Saer knew who he was working for, I think." But then he added a most irrelevant remark, "Poor Mari Vone!"

"What dost mean by that?" said Hugh, flushing a dark red.

"Oh, nothing," said Ivor. "I was only thinking how dull it must be for her to arrange the household for another girl."

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* Carpenter.

"Dull!" said Hugh earnestly, and with a momentary sadness in his voice. "Thou art mistaken, Ivor. Mari Vone knows not what dullness means. She would laugh to hear thy words."

"When art going to be married?"

"Why, on Tuesday," said Hugh; "of course I expect thee to be my teilwr. Pretty Gwennie Hughes and Laissabeth Owen are to be bridesmaids."

"That is what I came down to speak about," said Ivor. "I thought very likely thou wouldst want me to be teilwr."

"Of course! who else?"

"Well, I'm afraid I cannot be that," said Ivor awkwardly, digging his hands in his pockets. "See this letter, and say if thou thinkest I ought to refuse so good an offer."

Hugh took the letter with a look of serious surprise, and read it without comment from beginning to end; then he folded it up deliberately, and returned it to Ivor, looking him full in the face, and before his honest eyes Ivor's quailed and were cast down.

"Thou wilt better thyself very much by accepting their offer; but I never thought thou wouldst leave me, Ivor. I would have given thee as much as that had I known thou wert looking for it. I have, perhaps, been slow in rewarding thy merit; but, Ivor, I looked upon thee as a brother, and I meant only to wait until my wedding was over to offer to take thee into part-

nership, but now—go! I have been mistaken in thee; I never thought *money* would come between us. Even now—stay, Ivor, and I will give thee what Rees Carnarfon offers thee."

Ivor shook his head. "I have determined to go," was all he answered.

Hugh was wounded to the quick. He had a deep love for his manager—a love that had grown up for years between them, in spite of the difference in their ages—and to find that parting had no bitterness for Ivor meant bitter sorrow for Hugh.

"Then there's no more to be said, but pay what I owe thee," and he counted it out on the table.

Ivor gathered it stolidly into his palm, and took up his hat.

"Fforwel, Mishteer," he said, "we must part now; your life is full—you can do without me. There is Josh Howels, he is quite able to take my place; he knows all the ins and outs of the business," continued Ivor.

Hugh nodded. "Oh, yes, I can do without you," he said, in an offended tone.

"Fforwel, then," said Ivor, and he held out his hand, which Hugh, after a moment's hesitation, grasped warmly. "If you are ever in any trouble, send for me, Mishteer, and I will come."

Again they said "Fforwel," and parted—Hugh Morgan with a feeling of burning indignation and a smarting sense of disappointment;

Ivor with a dull, heavy aching, which he was not to throw off for many a weary month.

"Let him think me ungrateful and grasping," he said; "it is better for him than to know the truth. Fforwel, Hugh Morgan, I shall never meet a man like you again!"

Indignation and sorrow were the feelings uppermost in Hugh's mind as he sat smoking on his lonely hearth that evening. Madlen had gone to bed, and he sat long into the night, gazing into the dying embers of the peat fire, "chewing the cud of sweet and bitter thought." The announcement of Ivor's intended departure was a crushing blow to him. He had loved the man with all the tenderness which in his lonely life had had no other outlet until Gwladys Price's beauty had enslaved him; and even this had not altered his feelings for his friend, but had rather drawn him nearer to him. Mari Vone and Ivor had been his ideals of all that was manly and womanly, and his affections had gone out to them unstintingly; and now he would have been ashamed that any one should see how deeply he felt the change in Ivor—in truth, his bright, black eyes were dimmed with unshed tears as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and, slipping the wooden bolt of the front door into its hasp, walked slowly up the stairs.

The next day Ivor was absent from the sail-shed. Such a thing had never happened before, excepting when he had been attending to business for the Mishteer; but now everybody knew

this was not the cause, and gossip, with its busy tongue, suggested all sorts of reasons—all of them, fortunately, very wide of the mark. "He had injured his back too much to continue working," one said. "The increased wages offered by Rees Carnarfon had dazzled him." "He was tired of Mwntseison, and thought this would be a good opportunity for making a move," etc., etc.

"What can it mean?" said a girl to Gwladys, as she entered the sail-shed in the morning. "What can have come to Ivor? Have you any idea?"

Gwladys shook her head, and would not trust her voice to speak.

"I'll tell you what they say," said the girl, "that he is jealous of you."

They were already beginning to drop the familiar "thee" and "thou" in addressing Gwladys. She noticed the omission, and blushed a vivid red.

"There!" said her friend, holding up her hands in admiration, "there's the colour we've been used to see in your face; in my deed, you are not like yourself lately. Twt, twt, it is not such a wonderful thing to be married that you need grow thin and pale about it. 'That will be the end of us all,' as the old maid said when she watched the wedding. There! look at her now, Mishteer!" And Hugh, who was just entering, gazed with admiration at Gwladys' blushing face.

"Thou hast brought back her roses, indeed,

Malen," he said, smiling. "What hast been saying to her?"

"We were talking about Ivor Parry, and I tell her it is jealousy of her that has made him leave."

"Was that possible?" thought Hugh, as he turned away. "Was it the jealousy of love that had caused Ivor's strange behaviour?" and somehow the thought brought comfort to him; the loss of his friend did not weigh quite so heavily upon him. "He would get over this foolish feeling; he would return to Mwntseison again, and to his work in the sail-shed, and the same happy relations would exist between them as had of old."

Gwladys had retired to her old corner. The sail had already been spread in a convenient position for working, her stool placed before it, and she knew well whose tender care had arranged her work for her. She looked over to where Hugh Morgan was standing, stalwart and strong, as if he were going to address his workpeople, and a wan little smile flitted over her face, where the rich colour was already ebbing.

Hugh caught the smile, and his heart beat fast, for, though he hid his feelings from the eyes of the crowd, as was his bounden duty to do if he did not wish to brush the bloom off the peach, to rob his love of the romance of a real Welsh courtship, still his thoughts were ever hovering round Gwladys. Be it remembered that, though he was past the intoxication of "love's young

dream," he had succumbed to the passion which had assailed him with all the strong fervour belonging to middle age. His heart had been so long steeled against the glamour of love that now at last, when it had made a breach in his walls, he had completely surrendered to its mad enthralment. His fervid words, the passionate ardour of his looks and his embraces, fell upon Gwladys' soul with scorching pain; she could not feel the same love for him, and, therefore, wearied of its intensity. She reproached herself incessantly with coldness and want of feeling, and endeavoured by occasional warmth of manner to make up for the ordinary want of interest.

"I will love him when we are married, and, God helping me, I will be a good wife to him." This was the continual burden of her thoughts; her life was one constant struggle to banish from her mind the memory of Ivor, and, though his image ran like an under-current through the stream of her existence, she yet managed to keep all conscious thoughts of him in abeyance. "What was to come of it all? What was going to happen to smooth out the tangled path into which her feet had so unintentionally strayed? God knows! I can only trust, and try to be a good wife."

While these thoughts passed through her mind, Hugh was speaking, and the work-people had dropped their tools, and were listening with attention.

"You know, my friends," he said, "that a

great sorrow has fallen upon me in the loss of my right-hand man, Ivor Parry. His reasons for going are good ones. He has been offered a post of great responsibility, bringing with it an increased salary. It is every man's duty to make his way in the world if he can, and however much we may regret his loss here, I know that there is not one of you, man, woman, or child, who does not send with him to-day a greeting of love, and an earnest hope that his path may be blessed with every good which can fall to man in this world. Josh Howels will take his place as my manager, and I expect from you the same obedience and deference to him, and to my orders through him, as you have always shown to Ivor Parry."

Josh Howels rose to say a few words in answer. Gwladys leant back against the boarded wall of the shed, her head leaning on a rough shelf, her eyes fixed on the sky and sea, which were visible through the wide open doors. She saw the sea-gulls sailing in the air; she heard the hoarse cry of the puffins, which crowded the cliffs above Traeth-y-daran; and the picture of a moonlit beach, on which sat two figures close together, arose before her mental vision; but, with a spasm of pain, she literally shrank from the picture, and by a strong effort of will banished it from her mind.

In a few days the eventful week had dawned which she had dreaded, and yet longed for of late! Surely this dull aching would cease! sure-

ly this sharp agony of thwarted desires would be quenched when once she was Hugh Morgan's wife! Here lay her only hope—and to this hope she clung with the frantic energy of a drowning man. Her mother had finished all her simple preparations for the wedding, which was to bring such honour and lustre upon them; she had forced herself to forget that pale dawn when Gwladys had entered the house like a spirit or unrest. Sometimes when she heard of Ivor's intended departure from the village, or when she saw Gwladys' paling cheek, a throb of disquietude would pierce her heart; but Hugh Morgan's tenderness, his absolute devotion to her daughter re-assured her.

"She must love him," she thought; "no woman could help it! She will be a happy girl, and I shall be a happy mother-in-law!"

Indeed, in the whole village congratulations for Nani and Gwladys were rife, and "There's a fortunate girl!" was the refrain of every conversation upon the subject of the Mishteer's marriage. One alone was dissatisfied—Mari Vone! And as she sat in the gloaming on the eve of the wedding-day, her thoughts were evidently none of the happiest; her fair golden head drooped a little over her shining knitting needles, her graceful tall figure had a listless curve in it as she sat looking out of the open doorway; she heard a footstep on the road which she recognised at once. "He is going to Gwladys!" she thought, and she patiently clasped her hands

upon her bosom, as if to quiet the throbbing heart within; but no! the steps drew near, and against the red sunset the figure of Hugh Morgan loomed clear and large. He nodded pleasantly over his pipe, and Mari pushed a rush stool nearer the door for him to sit upon.

"That will do!" he said; "the smoke will blow out to the road." And with a long-drawn "Ah!" of satisfaction, he stretched out his legs, and gave himself up to the enjoyment of his pipe for a time, during which Mari plied him with questions, most of which he answered with a nod or shake of the head.

"Hast Madlen finished her baking? and roasted her chickens? The lobster and crab I have boiled myself. Gwladys will be glad of a dainty supper, for she will be very tired. It is well for her that she is marrying a man who can afford to give her dainties, for her mother tells me she has a poor appetite lately, and turns away from the barley bread."

"God bless her! she shall have white bread, white as a dog's tooth! and anything else she may fancy," said Hugh, and he puffed away in silence a little longer.

"You are sure to be at the wedding, Mari?"

"Oh, yes, I am coming," she answered quietly.

"It gave me a terrible fright when somebody said you were not coming—you and Ivor away. I should have felt it a bad omen, Mari."

"Oh, twt, twt! nonsense about bad omens!

If I had stopped away it would only have been because I am getting too old for weddings, and biddings, and fairs. I leave that to the young girls now."

Hugh laughed sarcastically.

"You know better than that, Mari. You know very well that whenever you appear the girls have all to hide their heads. They are none of them fit to hold a candle to you. What old age may make of you I don't know; but sure I am, no creature that treads God's earth graces it more than you do!"

"Oh! there's pretty words, whatever, Hugh," said Mari, dropping her knitting on her lap, and letting her hands fall with it, and gazing out rather sadly over Hugh's shoulder to the glowing sea and sky beyond.

"You are going to see Gwladys to-night, of course? She will be expecting you."

"Yes," said Hugh; "I am going now—but—but Mari, I felt I wanted to say something before I went. We have been friends for years—we shall be friends still—eh?" and he held out his broad brown hand.

Mari placed her own in it.

"Friends forever, Hugh, as long as life shall last!"

"And after," he said. "Well, fforwel, and God bless you!" and Hugh made his way under the wreaths and banners which already spanned the road, in readiness for next day's festivities, leaving Mari to her thoughts and to her

knitting, upon which by and by a large tear fell.

"Hoi! hoi! stop a bit!" said 'n'wncwl Jos, whom Hugh met stumping down the road. "Don't go under the banners before the wedding. It brings bad luck, man."

"It's too late," answered Hugh jovially, "for I have been under two or three," and his beaming smile and sparkling eyes, as he turned up the path towards Gwladys' cottage, showed that whatever the future had in store for him, to-night he was well content.

CHAPTER VII.

A WEDDING CALL.

THE month of May, with all her charms on earth, sea, and sky, had slipped away, and June reigned in her place, pouring forth her stores of bud and blossom, laying her warm hand on the ripening fruit in the orchards, turning their cheeks to crimson and gold, lulling the waves to rest, and folding the young broods of birds, which swarmed in the cliffs, in her mantle of soft balmy air. The shepherd's song was heard from the hillside as he sat basking in the sunshine, the clap, clap of the mill came on the breeze, the clinking of the village anvil, the voices of little children, all blended together in delicious harmony. Every door and window in the village was open, and the air was filled with the "sh-sh" of the sea. The children sat playing on the warm, dry sand. 'N'wncwl Jos sat astride on the keel of his boat, which had been turned upside down for repairs. He had a pot of tar and some tow beside him, but the work did not proceed very rapidly, as The Ship Inn was so near, and the heat of the sun made an occasional "blue"

a necessity. 'N'wncwl Jos's time was a commodity that hung heavily on his hands, and there was no hurry to get the boat done, so he exchanged his quid of tobacco from one cheek to another, and took his daily snooze in the June sunshine. Suddenly a gentle voice aroused him.

"'N'wncwl Jos!"

"Well, merch i?" * and he began busily to caulk a crack in his boat.

It was Gwladys who stood beside him, rather paler, perhaps, than when he saw her last, but with the same sweet curves over mouth and chin—with the same serious look in the brown eyes—which were shaded by the white sunbonnet.

"Wilt come and help me with the brewing this afternoon?" she said, with a languid tone in her voice, which, perhaps, was due to the heat.

"B'd siwr! b'd siwr!" † replied the old man, waking up with evident interest.

"Hugh says thou hast the secret for making the beer clear."

"So I have, merch i—learnt it from my grandmother. How far hast thou got with thy brewing?"

"The brecci is working," she said, "but I'm afraid it won't be clear. I have never brewed before."

"I'll be up this afternoon," said 'n'wncwl Jos, "and we shall see whether thine ale will be clear

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* My lass. † Of course.

or not. The Mishteer knew where to send thee for advice! Have you heard the news?"

"What news?"

"Why, that Ivor Parry is very ill; there he lies stranded at Carnarvon, poor fellow, in some strange lodging, laid up with fever. The Lapwing arrived at Abersethin last night from Carnarvon with slates, and brought the news. I thought he was sickening for something before he left; didst notice how white he looked?"

"Yes," said Gwladys, looking across the bay, where in the distance the line of the Carnarvonshire hills looked like a chain of blue clouds.

"The Mishteer will be shockin' sorry to hear it," said the old man, shaking his head. "I'm going to the sail-shed to tell him as soon as I have finished this job."

Gwladys turned silently away, her heart like a lump of lead, her eyes burning with tears which she must not shed. She must not even ask for more particulars—nay, she must not even wish for more; and as she walked back over the dusty road to her new home, she tightened her grasp upon her own feelings, and laid a strong curb upon her natural instincts.

She followed the progress of the brewing with punctilious care, patiently and gently directing Madlen, who endeavoured to frustrate all the plans of the new mistress with annoying obstinacy of a jibbing horse. She peeped into the mash-tub, and exclaimed:

"Sure as I'm here, it'll never clear; it's as thick as the Gwendraeth after rain!"

Getting no reply she tried in another direction:

"Ivor Parry and Mishteer always praised my ale; 'twas as clear as cryshal,* but cawl it'll be to-day!"

Gwladys smiled. "Thee's an evil prophetess, Madlen!"

They both looked up as a shadow fell through the open doorway. It was Gwen.

"I came to ask thee if I could help in the brewing. Thee'lt like be anxious about thy first brewing; how does it go?"

"Pretty well, I think," said Gwladys. "It will be casked to-night."

"Have you heard of Ivor's illness?" said Gwen, looking full into her face, which visibly blanched under her keen glance.

"'N'wncwl Jos has just been telling me," said her victim, trying in vain to speak in a natural tone. "What is it?"

"Fever, they say," said Gwen, "but a bad one. Siencyn saw him in his lodgings; 'tis a good thing he is well looked after. The daughter of the house seems very fond of him, and he of her, for he calls her continually, 'Gwladys! Gwladys!' if she only leaves him for a minute. Dir anwl!† how pale thou art getting! Art not well?"

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* Crystal. † Dear! dear!

"Not very," said Gwladys. "The heat has been so great to-day, and the wind blows straight from the limekilns."

"Perhaps, indeed! but thou hast lost thy roses whatever!" and lifting the lid of the mash-tub, she peered into its contents. "There's a muddy cloud in it! That will spoil thy brewing."

"Perhaps, indeed!" said Gwladys, using the formula that does duty in Wales for every variety of expression.

"What will the Mishteer say?"

"Oh, well, he won't mind much if I do not grieve about it."

"No; I suppose thou canst do pretty well what thou lik'st with him now. So can I with Siencyn; but that won't last. 'There's never a pig,' thee knowest, 'without a twist in his tail,' and 'never a man without a quirk in his temper!' Oh! yes, we shall see it some day; but as long as we have nothing to *hide* we need fear nothing. But diwedd anwl! * the time goes like the andras.† I must go. Pity for Ivor Parry—isn't it?"

When she was gone, Gwladys began to breathe again, and endeavoured to steel herself against the wounds which she would receive in her passage through life, and to *endure*, for this, she felt, would be her portion for the future.

"Gwladys!" called a manly voice, and Hugh entered from the sunshine, "where art, my little

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* Good gracious! † Devil.

one? Come and comfort me, for I have had bad news, and thou wilt be sorry, too! Poor Ivor is ill; hast heard?"

"Yes," she said; "Gwen has just been telling me; but he has a good nurse, and we must not look on the dark side."

"No, true, merch i; but I'd give much to have him back here again—foolish boy! I believe he was jealous of my love for thee! Siencyn Owen says he was quite delirious; called constantly for the girl who nurses him, 'Gwladys, Gwladys!' sometimes in such pitiful tones that Siencyn felt like crying; and talking, talking without stopping about the sea and the moon and the stars! 'Gwladys,' he said, 'our star is sinking—sinking—sinking!' Oh, 'tis pity, indeed, we can't have him here to nurse him—thy gentle ways and thy tender care would bring him round, Gwladys; but what is the matter, lass?"

"Oh, a pain!" said the girl, laying her hand on her bosom. "A sharp pain, a real pain! I have had it before to-day; I think it must be the brecci, which I have tasted too often." And a pitiful little smile crossed her face.

Hugh was all anxiety and fright, and not without cause, for Gwladys had quietly slipped to the ground in a dead faint.

In a moment, Madlen the contumacious had forgotten her pique, and was rushing about in search of the inevitable "drop of brandy," while Hugh lifted his wife from the ground, and placed her on the settle, where she presently regained

consciousness. His tender words of love were the first that reached her ears.

"Gwladys, fâch! my little girl! dear heart! open thine eyes. Art better, darling?"

"Yes, yes," said the girl, reaching both hands towards him, and bursting into tears. "Hugh, Hugh, you have married a foolish, weak girl; but have patience with me, and I will get wiser and better."

"Oh, ho! as for that," said Hugh, tenderly drawing her towards him, "I want no change in thee!"

After the never-failing restorative of a cup of tea, Gwladys revived, and Hugh was happy again; and when 'n'wncwl Jos arrived in the afternoon, Hugh left him with Gwladys to the mysteries of casking the beer, his wooden leg stumping up and down incessantly from the beer-cellar to the living-room. He placed some mysterious object on the table, wrapped up in paper, refusing to unfold it until the last moment.

"Now," he said, when the casks had been placed in position, and everything prepared for pouring in the brecci, "now, then, Mishtress, let's see if your brewing won't be the clearest in Mwntseison."

"Gwen said there was a cloud in it this morning!"

"Gwen!" he said, with a start. "She hasn't been looking at it, has she?"

Gwladys nodded.

"Ach y fi! there's a pity! She is too nearly

related to Peggi Shân for her eyes or her fingers to do any good to thy brewing. I remember once, when my mother was brewing (and she was famed for her clear cwrw), but jâr-i! Peggi Shân came to the door; 'twas a very sunny day, and her shadow fell straight over the mash-tub, and, sure as I'm here, the beer was as thick as bwdran! * Always after that we kept the door locked on brewing days."

"Perhaps, indeed!" said Gwladys! "I will do so next time, for there is something about Gwen I don't like."

"Well, we've got nothing to do but try our best now; but 'tis pity Gwen looked at it!" And he unfolded from the crumpled newspaper a large lump of coal, which, after well washing, he placed at the bottom of the cask, pouring the fermented brecci gently over it. "There it is! Now all I ask for my secret is—that when your cask is empty, you will take the coal out, and burn it in the middle of your strongest fire; it will bring good luck to your next brewing; you will be surprised to see what a mass of mud will be gathered round it, and your beer will be like the cryshal! and I'll come and taste the first glass."

"Yes, thou shalt indeed!"

"Well, good-bye, Mishtress; 'tis only Gwen I am afraid of now! Hast heard any more about Ivor Parry?"

"No," answered Gwladys, in a calm voice

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* A kind of porridge.

which astonished herself, "only that he is well nursed by the daughter of the house—Gwladys is her name!"

"Well, well, poor fellow! when you are ill it is well to have a woman about you," and he stumped away.

Quite in the gloaming, when the hearth had been swept up, Gwladys, dressed in her neatest frock of Welsh flannel, with her favourite pink muslin kerchief tied loosely round her neck, sat knitting near the little window, through which the setting sun sent a rosy parting glow.

Hugh had gone a few miles into the country on business, and Nell Jones and Sara Pentraeth, two near neighbours, had taken the opportunity of paying their first wedding call upon the bride. They were constant friends and companions, and although they quarrelled at almost every interview, never seemed happy apart. They had heard so much of the glories of Gwladys' new home that they had been dying to see it for the last fortnight, but had been unable hitherto to overcome their jealousy sufficiently to pay the requisite visit; this evening, however, they both made their appearance in the doorway.

"Dir anwl! is it you, Nell fâch? and you, Sara, venturing to leave your little baby? there's kind you are," and Gwladys dusted too already speckless chairs and placed them for her guests.

"Well, we have come to wish you 'Priodas dda,' Mishtress," said Sara, who was spokeswoman, Nell being too busily engaged with rov-

ing eyes in taking stock of the furniture; "and we would have come before, but as for me, indeed, to goodness, my heart sank down to my clocs, when I heard of all the grand things around you; but I am glad now I came, for I am not so frightened after all, and I don't see anything out of the way here!"

"I hope not indeed," said Gwladys, smiling.

"No, no! the Mishteer knew better than to make it *too grand* for you; it would be too great a change. But that is a beautiful chair you are sitting on—solid oak, I see!"

"Yes," said Gwladys, rising; "Hugh had it made for me."

"Caton pawb!"* said both women, raising their hands in astonishment, "a red velvet cushion! Wel! wel! the queen couldn't have anything better! But there, we all know how an old lover spoils his wife!"

Here Nell turned to the dresser.

"Wel, to be sure! the dresser looks nice; I have heard tell it is the best-dressed dresser in the parish; but so many things alike. For my part, I like different colours—green, blue, and pink, not all pink like these. And what are these?" and she gingerly raised the covers of two vegetable dishes, which stood one each side of the dresser shelf.

"They are for the potatoes and cabbages," said Gwladys meekly, feeling that she was indeed

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* An exclamation, as "good gracious!"

in danger of hurting the susceptibilities of her touchy neighbours by the exhibition of her treasures; "and those are the dishes—six plates and three dishes, and two little ones for gravy; they called it a dinner service at the shop at Caer Madoc."

"Perhaps indeed!" said Sara, whose mingled feelings of jealousy and astonishment could only be expressed by this never-failing phrase.

Meanwhile, Nell was walking round the room, examining with curious eyes and busy fingers every little adornment which the cosy cottage contained; but the coffor was the object of their deepest admiration.

"Look at the polish of it!" said Nell, who was not so clever as Sara at hiding her feelings.

Gwladys with pride opened every drawer.

"Full to the brim!" said Nell, with gasping envy. "I expect old 'Ebenezer' will be well filled on Sunday; everyone is looking out for your new jacket."

"They will be disappointed then," said Gwladys, laughing, "for Hugh comes with me to Brynseion from this time forward."

"Wel! wel! the Mishteer has given up his soul to you!" in a tone half spiteful, half abject, for "to give up his chapel" was synonymous with "giving up his soul," even though it was only to attend another of the same denomination more conveniently situated.

At this last proof of Hugh Morgan's complete subjection to his wife's charms the two women

were quite overcome, and when they went away they made their adieux in more humble tones, and tacked a "mem" and a bob curtesy on to the end! But it was only until they were out of sight that this meek behaviour continued, for as they walked up the road they drew closer together, and with sundry nudges and winks discussed the situation.

"Did ever man see such a thing?" said Sara. "A red velvet cushion! didst ever hear of such a thing? Nani's daughter to sit upon a red velvet cushion! No wonder her stool in the sail-shed is so often empty! Wel! wel! the ways of Providence are puzzling indeed. But of all things in the world, Nell, fâch—the dishes for the potatoes! Wouldn't basins do, I should like to know?"

"Oh! I don't expect they *use* them," said Nell. "What did she call them? Some English name."

"'A dinner service,' if you please," said Sara, in tones of disgust. "Ach y fi! what is the world coming to when Nani's daughter sits on a red velvet cushion, and has a 'dinner service' on her dresser? dost know what, Nell, fâch? I am sick of the world; it is so foolish. And didst see her ring? as thick as two, Nell, fâch! Wel, wel! the poor Mishteer has made a fool of himself at last! 'Dwla dwl yw dwl hên!'* But, Nell," with another nudge and a shrewd wink, "we've got to curtsey to her, my woman.

* "There is no fool like an old fool."

But we've got to hide our feelings in this world, Nell, fâch. There's two pigs in the sty; and that pretty poppet won't do all the salting herself, I'll be bound. And there's the herrings to be salted in the autumn. I won't mind doing the work for her, but there's many a bit of pork can be spared from the salting, and I daresay she'll throw a dozen or two of herrings into my pay!"

"Oh, I can salt as well as thee," said Nell, "and I can set the garden for them——"

"Oh, yes, I daresay thee'lt pick something out of them!" said Sara. "So we must curtsey and say, 'mem' to Mishtress. Ach y fi! I am tired of this old world. There's Shemi coming home, I must go and put the cawl on; good-night."

As they turned into their cottages, Hugh came whistling down the road. He had settled his business in the farm on the moor, and was returning with hurrying steps to the home which held his young bride; for, no doubt, in a great measure the old proverb was right, and Hugh, the man of forty, was more absolutely enslaved by the new-born passion which had come into his life than a younger man would have been. The thought of Gwladys filled his heart to the exclusion for the time of every other consideration. She was the sweetest and fairest woman in the world—the peerless pearl of all the maidens!—and his whole life should be devoted to her happiness. He would guard her path from every danger; he would brush every thorn away, and

spread it with flowers for her to walk upon; and as he saw the light which twinkled from his window, and pictured Gwladys' slim figure moving about the room, his heart leapt up with joy, and life seemed to stretch before him in one long boundless haze of happiness. He passed 'n'wncwl Jos standing at his cottage door with a nod only.

"Ha, ha!" said the old man, "'tis no use asking you to come in now—too much attraction at home, eh?".

"Well," said Hugh, stopping a moment, "'tis too late to-night, and I don't like to leave the little one alone, you see; but to-morrow night, she is going to see Nani, and I'll come up and sit with thee and Mari. How is she?"

"Quite well," said 'n'wncwl Jos. "She has been hay-making all day, and has not come home yet."

On the following Sunday the worshippers at Brynseion Chapel paid less attention than usual to their minister's fiery sermon. Gwladys Morgan's jacket had been the subject of their thoughts and conversation during the foregoing week, and now here it was in all its glory of lace and bead trimming, plainly exposed to every eye—nay, Sara Pentraeth and Nell Jones had been so fortunate as to secure seats in the very next pew behind the Mishteer and Mishtress, so that they were able correctly to appraise its value. Nell's eyes as usual roamed over every bead and frill, and a series of unconscious nudges in Sara's side expressed the feelings which the presence of the

minister and congregation obliged her to conceal. Hugh had commissioned a friend, a sea-captain, to buy the jacket for him at a large seaport town up the bay. The price was to be no object, but fashion and good taste alone were to be considered, and consequently its arrival had created quite a little ferment in the village. Gwladys, when it was presented to her the day after her marriage, went into the expected raptures; but, truth to tell, its grandeur threw a shadow over her Sundays, and though Nani looked across the chapel at her with beaming admiration, she was glad to exchange it for her quiet Welsh flannel dress when the three services of the day were over, and Hugh and she could doff their broadcloth and silk, and lay them to rest in the coffer until the following Sunday. It was midsummer, and as they emerged from the crowded chapel on the day when the glories of the jacket first dazzled the eyes of Mwntseison, the sweet, pure air greeted them like a blessing. The road, shaded on both sides with old gnarled elder trees, was white with the fallen blossoms, the scent of which mingled with that of the wild honeysuckle climbing over the hedges.

They stopped a moment to lean over a bridge which crossed the little stream just where it took a headlong leap over the rocks down to the lower level, upon which it made its more sober way through the village into the sea. The spray from the waterfall wetted their faces as they looked through the honeysuckle and ivy into the

depths below. The swallows darted backwards and forwards where the water filled the air with its rushing sound.

"'Tis a gay world, lass, eh?" said Hugh, looking with almost wistful tenderness into Gwladys' face.

"Yes, indeed," she answered; "'tis a pity we live in houses; we lose a lot of beauty so."

"Yes," said Hugh; "but to me, now, the real beauty and happiness of life are at home. Since I have thee always with me, my life seems to be almost too full of joy. Dost feel the same, f'anwylyd? Art as happy with me?"

For a moment there was a rushing sound in her ears which drowned the sound of the waterfall, and tears filled her eyes as she sought for a truthful answer.

"Oh, Hugh, bâch!" she said at last, "who could live with thee without loving thee? Indeed I am far happier than I deserve to be—my only trouble is lest I should not fill thy life completely; but if thou art telling the truth, and dost not find anything wanting in me, that is all I want."

"Nothing, merch i, nothing," said Hugh. And he spoke the truth, for he had not as yet fully realised that there *was* a something wanting in his cup of happiness; while in Gwladys' heart, every fresh proof of her husband's passionate love seemed to press deeper the barb of unrest and misery which was poisoning her life. His tender words, his caresses only deepened her

sense of loss, while, added to her own sorrow, pity for Hugh Morgan began to awaken within her. She had not realised that the bitterness could not be hers alone, but that through her it would reach the man who loved her, and whom she admired and honoured so much.

"Could I only tell mother; but no!" She felt she must hide her misery from every human eye, and, above all, from Hugh, whose heart the knowledge would break. Yes, whatever it cost her, she must hide it from him; and she must make more strenuous efforts to appear and be glad in Hugh's love, and in all the comforts surrounding her.

All this passed through her mind while she watched the swallows darting through the spray and listened to the rush of the waterfall. She turned to her husband with as merry a smile as she could call to her lips.

"Come, 'mach-geni, we must not quite forget our home in watching the birds and the water; let us go home."

There was a ring of gaiety in the speech which Hugh felt and responded to at once, and leaning over the bridge he reached a wild rose which grew out of the mossy masonry.

"A posy for my darling," he said, offering it to her

She took it, smiling, and fastened it on her breast in spite of the silk jacket; and Hugh Morgan turned homewards a happy man.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONFIDENCES.

THE summer and autumn months slipped by, bringing but little change to Mwntseison. The hay harvest brought its usual sweet additions to the charms of the season—the scent of the dry hay and meadow-sweet on the air, the call of the corncrake in the grey evenings, the wisps of hay left hanging on the hedges by the laden waggons. The men and women had all become a shade browner from exposure to the sun, for even the work of the sail-shed was suspended for the hay-making; and there was not a man, woman, or child who did not find some excuse for tossing the hay. The air seemed full of song, for people at Mwntseison always felt the work went better while they sang in chorus together. In the sail-shed there was a murmur of singing, commenced by the women and taken up by the lads and men until alto, tenor, and bass filled up the harmony. Best of all went the music when the Mishteer's rich voice joined in in the bass. A favourite glee was The Herring Boat, which went with so tuneful a swing that it seemed to suit every kind of occupation and experience.

The children sang it sitting in little groups on the warm sand, the sailors on the bay, and the haymakers in the field; but oftenest of all, the walls of the old sail-shed echoed to its tones. It ran as follows, though English words can but poorly express the vivid brightness of the original:—

"Out there on the raging sea
The wind is high;
Nothing but foam and mist to see
Under the sky!
Father and mother, come down to the shore;
Friends and neighbours, stand at the door;
Pray—if you never have prayed before—
'Lord, hear our cry!'
Torn sails and broken mast—
Oh! let the boat come home at last!
Ja houp, hal! Ja houp, hal!
Hal! Hal! Hal! Hal!

"Out there on the stormy main
A calm has come!
The sunshine chases the wind and rain,
And gilds the foam.
Father and mother, come down to the shore;
Friends and neighbours, come out to the door;
And shout—if you never have shouted before—
A welcome home!
Torn sails and broken mast—
The boat is safe at home at last!
Ja houp, hal! Ja houp, hal!
Hal! Hal! Hal! Hal!"

The corn harvest was nearly over before the news reached the village of Ivor Parry's convalescence.

The Lapwing had flitted across the bay to the northern port, and had returned, bearing the news of his recovery and many warm greetings from him to his friends at Mwntseison.

"Tell me exactly how he was, my lad. I hunger to hear something of him," said Hugh Morgan to the youthful captain of the little ship, and speaking English, for sailors possessed the distinguishing accomplishment of being able to speak the English language, and are proud of it. Hugh himself spoke it fluently and grammatically, though with a broad Welsh accent.

"Wel, he wass looking pale and thin," replied Captain Jones, "and the daughter of the house brought a chair for him to sit on outside the door. Gwladys is her name, and she's a purty girl, too!

"'There,' he says, 'turn my chair where the wind will blow straight from the sea.'

"''Tis blowing straight across the bay today,' sez I. ''Tis coming later from Mwntseison than me, though I only left yesterday morning.'

"Wel, he didn't say nothin' to that, but he took a long breath, and he sighed very heavy.

"'Oh, I'll soon be well now,' he sez, 'and begin my work again.' And when I was parting, he sez: 'Remember me to the Mishteer,' sez he, 'and tell him that distance don't make no difference at all in my friendship for him.'"

"And what message to the Mishtress?"

"'Oh, yes, of course,' he sez, 'my kind re-

membrances to her, too!' and he didn't say no more."

"Well, that's enough," said Hugh, returning to his Welsh, "to know that he is getting well, and that his heart is with us yet. We'll have him back again yet, boys. We'll send him a 'round robin,' and every one in Mwntseison shall sign it. Thee and I shall be the first to sign it. Dost hear, Gwladys? But thee must sprack up, girl, or Ivor will ask me what I've been doing to thee to make thee so pale and thin!" And he, too, sighed heavily, as Ivor had.

The winter months sped on, and the spring once more awakened land and sea. On one of her brightest and freshest mornings the doors of the sail-shed stood wide open, as they had done a year ago, and Hugh Morgan as usual worked busily amongst his men, arranging, watching, directing with indefatigable spirit, though, truth to tell, things had been going rather against him lately. He missed Ivor's watchful interest in his business, and his absence, like an intangible cloud, somewhat tarnished the brightness of his life.

At the first glance, Hugh's manly form and handsome face seems unchanged, but a closer scrutiny reveals a haunting sadness behind his genial smile.

Gwladys was also present, and was busily engaged in directing some portion of the work which she took under her own particular surveillance, and part of which she was able to do in

her own home, much against her husband's wishes, for he would have liked to see her spend her days, her time, and his money in pleasure only; but the time hung heavily on her hands, and she felt herself perforce obliged to seek for work outside her own home, and playfully insisted upon taking upon her a portion of the work to which she had been accustomed from childhood.

"Wilt come up to-night, Nell," she said, as she left the shed one day, "and bring up those reef points and the new flag for me to hem? There's a bag of sucan * and half a cheese you can have."

"Tank'ee, tank'ee, Mishtress fâch," said Nell, standing up to make a series of bob curtseys; "there's good you are to me, and I will bring you a bunch of 'moon rocket.' I gathered it when the moon was full in a cleft of the rocks at Traeth-y-daran. 'Tis splendid for bringing the colour back to your blood. Will you try it, mem?"

"Yes," said Gwladys, "I will try it to please thee, Nell. From Traeth-y-daran, didst say? Bring it to me; but I am quite well," and she left the shed, Hugh looking after her with a wistful sadness, for it was now very evident that the girl, who a year ago might have stood for a picture of "Hebe," had now lost much of the

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* Crushed oats, with the husks on, used for making a kind of strained porridge.

full ripe form, as well as the glow of health, which had once made her so peculiarly attractive. She was still very fair and lovely, perhaps more so than before, but in a different way. Her dark brown eyes had deep shadows beneath them, and her lips a curve of sadness. What was the cause of this sudden failing of health? Hugh tried in vain to discover, and he was fast resigning himself to the belief that her delicacy was due to that much-dreaded disease, consumption, which was very prevalent in that neighbourhood. Whether from the continual intermarriage of the villagers on the coast, or from some other cause, this cruel disease is very rife amongst the young people of both sexes; and Hugh looked every day, with nervous fears, for signs of the dreaded enemy.

Gwladys laughed at his fears, however, and continued to declare she was quite well.

Mari Vone, who was her most intimate friend and companion, was as much puzzled as Hugh at first. With the quick intuition of a loving heart, she had soon discovered that Hugh and Gwladys' marriage had not brought to either of them the complete happiness which she had expected would follow their union. She spent some part of every day in Gwladys' home, either helping in the household duties or sitting with her at work, engaged in those long chats which seem to fill up any blank there may be in the lives of women, as smoking does with men. She never stayed later than four or five o'clock, and Hugh was wont to reproach her playfully with

always leaving before he came home. Though Mari pleasantly laughed away his reproaches, it was true that she could not look on unmoved while the man who yet reigned supreme in her heart caressed and dallied with his young wife. It was true that she was not yet strong enough to feel no bitterness of spirit when she saw the tender affection which Hugh lavished upon Gwladys, and which seemed to be received by her without the reciprocal delight which Mari herself would have felt. Her pure and unselfish love made her desire his happiness before any earthly good, and it wounded her true heart to see that he missed something in his wife, without plainly realising that he did so, or, at all events, without confessing it even to himself.

It was during one of these long chats, when the two friends sat knitting at the cottage door, that the suspicion first dawned upon her which was afterwards to develop into such a miserable certainty. They had sat silent for some time, both heads bent over their clicking knitting needles, when Mari looked up and spoke.

"Wel, wyr! Lallo's new pig seems to be as noisy as the last year's. You can always hear them abusing each other."

"Yes," said Gwladys, laughing; "I think, between the baby and the pig, Siencyn will be glad to go to sea again."

"'Tis a crying baby, indeed," said Mari; "a frail little thing. I'm afraid it will not live."

"Oh, I hope so! It would break poor

Gwen's heart to lose it. I can't think why—but she's always very spiteful to me."

"To thee!" said Mari. "Why? I wonder—but she dare not show her spite to the Mishtress, surely! Poor Gwen! I pity her. Didst know she was very fond of Ivor Parry once?"

A crimson blush overspread Gwladys' face as she bent more closely over her knitting—a blush that faded as quickly as it had appeared, leaving on her face a deathly pallor, though she answered in a calm voice:

"I remember hearing something of it."

Mari saw the blush and the pallor, and quickly changed the conversation, for if there was one trait in her character more conspicuous than another, it was tenderness, and, with a spasm of pain, she perceived she had touched upon a secret in Gwladys' life.

"It is drawing near tea-time; I must go. 'N'wncwl Jos is so punctual! the tap of his wooden leg is almost as good as a clock."

"Here is Hugh," said Gwladys, and she ran to the gate to meet him.

There was only the usual "Wel, merch i!" and "Wel, Hugh!" at meeting, for the Welsh, although so emotional—perhaps because of this—are very chary of any exhibition of tenderness in public.

"Ah! now I have caught thee, Mari, going to slip away as usual just as I come in. Indeed, now, stay to tea. 'N'wncwl Jos has gone out in the Speedwell, and she will not be back till nine

o'clock; he told me to tell thee. Come, sit thee down, and keep Gwladys and me company."

"Oh, then I will, and I can fry those light-cakes for thee, Gwladys." And before long they were seated round the oak table, in the shade of the big chimney, for the evenings were still cold, although it was May.

Gwladys hovered round her husband with all sorts of little nameless attentions, endeavouring, as she always did, by faithfully performing and even exceeding in every wifely duty to make up to him for the love which was lacking in her.

"There's a bonnie pile of lightcakes," said Hugh, "as tall as Caer Madoc church-steeple; but never mind, I'll soon knock the pinnacle off it!" and he flipped two or three on to Gwladys' and Mari's plates.

"One at a time, Hugh bâch," said Gwladys. "Thee wouldst soon make me ill if thou hadst thy way."

"I'm afraid I have had my way, lass. Dost see how pale she is, Mari? What shall we do to her?"

"Well, I think, take her for a trip on the Aden Ydon. She sails for Cork in June. That would bring her roses back."

"Perhaps indeed," said Hugh. "But how shall I manage it? I have had complaints of the work in the sail-shed from many quarters lately, and I must watch it closer. But one thing is certain, I must ask Ivor Parry to come back, and that won't hurt my pride, for we've always

been like brothers, and I believe his friendship is mine still."

"No doubt of that," said Mari, endeavouring to attract Hugh's notice from his wife, who sat with bent head, changing from white to red, and from red to white.

When Hugh had left the house, she raised her hands, which had been clasped on her lap, and covered her drooping face with them, while Mari, pretending not to notice her, bustled about clearing the tea-table; but so long did she remain in this position that it was useless longer to ignore it, so, drawing a stool to her side, she gently tried to draw away the hands which Gwladys still kept over her face, and was surprised to find them wet with tears.

"Gwladys, anwl! what is it?"

"Something I must not tell you!" said the young wife, with head still bent, the tears coursing each other down her cheeks; "something I must keep for ever here,"—and she smote her breast with her clenched hand—"until I lie in my coffin. You heard Hugh say everything has gone wrong with him lately? It is true, Mari fâch. Oh, everything is wrong! The whole world is twisted and torn, and I long to escape from it."

Mari sat beside her, holding one of her hands in stricken silence. "Ts, ts!" was all she said, while Gwladys' tears flowed unrestrainedly.

"Poor Hugh! poor Hugh!" she said between her sobs; and Mari cried too, but softly.

"I have heard that once Hugh and thee were lovers, Mari?"

"Oh, in the old, old past, Gwladys. Now his heart is thine alone, and my only prayer is that he should be happy with thee. Dost believe me, merch i?"

"Yes, I believe all that is good of thee, Mari. Thou art an angel somehow straying on earth. Wilt be my guardian angel, and love me still, though I am so weak and sinful? Oh, why did not Hugh marry thee, instead of me? I believe in his heart of hearts he loves thee still, although he has been carried away by a sudden wind of passion. Yes—yes; there has been some terrible mistake," and she started to her feet almost wildly, "and it can never be set right—never, never, never!" And with the last word she flung herself down on the settle, crying bitterly.

Mari waited a moment in dazed silence.

"Art better, merch i?" she said at length, when the sobs began to grow less violent; and stooping down, and whispering so softly that not even the proverbial walls could hear, she said, "Now, no word of explaining; none is wanted between thee and me; we have been soul to soul together to-day. I know all thy secret, and I think thou knowest mine!"

Gwladys' lips moved in assent, but she seemed too broken down for more.

"Listen again," said Mari. "We are both women whose dream of happiness has been shattered; but there is still one thing which we can

work for as long as life shall last—Hugh's happiness. Can we work together, Gwladys fâch? can we still be friends with these bitter secrets between us? It is for thee to settle."

Gwladys' only answer was to raise her arms and clasp them round Mari's neck, drawing her close to her in a long embrace, during which some silent tears were shed by both.

"Never leave me, Mari!"

"Never!"

CHAPTER IX.

GWEN'S REBELLION.

"WHERE is Gwen?" said Hugh Morgan, looking at an unoccupied stool at one end of the sail-shed; "she has not been here for two days."

"No," said one of her friends, "she's at home, Mishteer. Her little baby is ill, and she and Lallo are wild with fear of losing her."

"Ts, ts, that's a pity! Has she had a doctor?"

"Malen hysbys * has been there, and the child would have been well by now, but that Siencyn would open the window before he sailed yesterday; of course the little one caught cold, and now I'm afraid——" and she shook her head mournfully.

"Well, well," said the Mishteer, "I must go and see about getting a doctor for her." And he left the shed, and passed up the road towards Gwen's cottage, upon reaching which, he found her deeply intent upon a morsel of raw meat, which she was roasting on a fork before the fire.

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* Supernaturally wise.

Her little baby, meanwhile, white and moaning, lay across Lallo's knees, who also seemed much interested in the bit of meat.

"Well, Gwen, I am sorry to hear your little one is ill; but diranwl! babies have nine lives and recover from all sorts of illnesses."

Gwen scarcely withdrew her eyes from her cooking to answer.

"Oh! of course, I know that, Mishteer, I know she will be well soon; but if you had a child of your own, you would know 'tis a cruel thing to see it suffering!"

"B'tshwr, indeed!" said Hugh. "I can quite understand that; but what is it that you are cooking?"

"A mouse," said Gwen. "Malen hysbys says a roasted mouse will cure my baby."

"Caton pawb!" said Hugh, "what nonsense, Gwen! I will send for Dr. Hughes; he ought to have been here sooner. A roasted mouse, indeed. Where did she hear that from? From Peggi Shân?"

"Peggi Shân knew more than Dr. Hughes a good deal," said Gwen; "and if she was alive now my baby would not be suffering; but it will be well by to-morrow."

"I hope so, indeed," said Hugh; "but if you do not let Dr. Hughes see it, I think it will die, Gwen; that is the plain truth, and there is no use hiding it. I will send for him at once. And throw away that nasty thing you are roasting," he added as he left the house.

"Die!" said Gwen fiercely; "she shall not die! There's calmly he says 'die!' I wish I had never let that wife of his touch my baby; it hasn't been well since she nursed it here one day."

As she spoke, through the open doorway came the sounds of singing from a knot of women and children passing by.

"Hard-hearted wretches!" she said, viciously pounding the mouse, which had been cooked to a cinder. "They can laugh and sing while my child is sick; they don't care. But their time will come!" she added, as she mixed the dark powder with some brown sugar and butter, and, with cooing, tender words, she coaxed the little moaning baby to swallow the unsavory morsel. At the same time Dr. Hughes entered, breezy and fresh from his drive over the hill.

"Hello!" he called, as his portly form filled up the whole doorway. "What's wrong here? I met Hugh Morgan down the road, and he told me I was wanted here. What is it, Gwen? Hello!" he said again, in quite an altered tone, as he caught sight of the little panting baby, its pretty lips discoloured with smears of butter and sugar and something worse. "What's this?" and he looked in anger from one woman to another. "How dare you! You have been trying some of your filthy messes again, and with the usual result. You have killed your baby. Had you sent for me in time, I might have saved him; it is now too late."

At the words "too late" Gwen screamed, and snatched the little one from its grandmother's lap. Disturbed by the scream it opened its eyes for a moment, and then died with a little fluttering gasp.

"There, lay it down, poor little thing," said the doctor; "you can do no more for it; but next time you see a baby dying, don't add to its pain by stuffing filthy things into its mouth."

Gwen fixed her heavy-lidded eyes upon the doctor with an angry look, saying:

"Go out of my house if you can do no good, and leave me to my sorrow. You will repent of this."

"Of what, woman?"

She made no answer further than to point to the door, and Dr. Hughes went out, shrugging his shoulders.

Through the open doorway the singing of the children came in on the breeze.

"Fileiniaid," Gwen said, shaking her clenched fist at the doorway. "I hate them. Are they all to be happy while I am miserable?" and hastily rising, she took her little dead baby in her arms, and pressing it to her bosom, paced moaning up and down the room; while Lallo, even in her fresh sorrows remembering the village proprieties, closed the door and covered up the little window with a pocket handkerchief, and, with no little difficulty, at last persuaded Gwen to lay the child on the bed.

"Extraordinary woman that Gwen," said Dr.

Hughes, as he called by the sail-shed to report to Hugh Morgan. "Devilish temper. Second Peggi Shân. You see if I'm not right. The little baby? Oh, dead as a herring, its last moments disturbed by some filthy concoction stuffed into its mouth."

"Yes, I know, indeed," said Hugh; "a roasted mouse. I saw her cooking it." And Dr. Hughes drove away with an oath.

"Mari," said 'n'wncwl Jos one day as he stumped in from the sunshine; "isn't there a hole in Lallo's penucha?"

"Yes," said Mari, looking at him with some surprise. "There is a short board near the fireplace, where the damp earth comes quite near to the top. It was going to be finished fifteen years ago when the floor was boarded, but the hole is still there. Why, 'n'wncwl Jos?"

"Oh, nothing," said the old man. "Hast heard the little one is to be buried on Monday? and to-morrow night there's to be a gwylnos.* Wilt come, Mari?"

"No, indeed," she said. "I will come to the prayer meeting, because then I can sit at the door or in the passage; but to be shut up all night in a room with a dead body makes me faint, and besides, I don't like a gwylnos."

"Wel, no," said her uncle; "I know both thou and Hugh Morgan are very odd in some things, and that is one thing—not to like a

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* Watch-night.

gwylnos. Wel, I'm going anyway," and he stumped vigorously, and put on a defiant look. "What is the good of my never having married if I'm going to be ruled by a woman after all? Caton pawb! Wouldst like us to bury our dead as the Saeson * do? To shut the door upon them and say, 'There! we've finished with you; you stop there by yourself in the dark!' And then click with the key, and sit down in the warm kitchen to a comfortable meal, and talk about who's to have his clothes? No, no! Lallo and I are too old friends for me to desert her now in her trouble; so to the gwylnos I'll go, merch i, whatever thou say'st!"

"Well, b'dsiwr! if you like, 'n'wncwl Jos," said Mari; "and I only meant that I didn't like the drinking and talking that goes on at a gwylnos, for death is too solemn a thing for such nonsense."

"Oh, jâr-i! I agree with thee there. For a man to lie there, stiff and cold, hearing and saying nothing, while his friends are smoking and chatting near him, good liquor passing around him and he knowing nothing about it—well, yes! 'tis a solemn thing! But that's no reason why we shouldn't stay with the poor fellow as long as he is above ground, if it was only to comfort his relatives!" And he began to "furrage" in an old sea-chest, where he kept his own personal treasures safely under lock and key, bringing out

* English.

from its depths one of the square, high-shouldered bottles of "Hollands" which he had collected in a mysterious manner during his seafaring days. Having closed the chest with a bang, he hid the bottle under his rough pilot coat, and made his way up to Lallo's cottage. His low tap at the door was answered by Gwen herself.

"So sorry, calon fâch!" he said, "for thy trouble and for Lallo's. This is for the gwylnos, merch i; give it to thy mother," and he held out the square bottle.

Gwen made no answer, but turned away and called her mother, leaving 'n'wncwl Jos with outstretched arms at the doorway.

"Jâr-i! there's manners!" he muttered to himself.

But if Gwen was scant of gratitude, Lallo made up for it to overflowing.

"'N'wncwl Jos bâch! There's kind you are to remember us in our trouble. A hundred thanks! and I hope you will be at the gwylnos; I will never forget your kindness!"

"Twt, twt! hisht about kindness," said the old man, backing from the doorway, in fear lest he might be asked in "to see the body," a compliment considered due to everyone who knocked at the door.

On the following day, which was Sunday, after every service in the two chapels was added the notice, given out by one of the deacons in the "set fawr" or big seat under the pulpit:

"There will be a prayer-meeting at the house of Lallo Hughes this evening at eight o'clock, to be followed by a gwylnos for any friends who are wishful to attend."

In the gloaming, when the many services of the day were over, the congregations trooped down towards Lallo's cottage. Of course, there was no room inside, but they overflowed into the cwrt and into the roadway, where they stood in the gathering twilight, only hearing a faint murmur of the prayers which were offered up inside the house; but still they waited patiently, listening to the rising and falling of the prayers, which mingled with the soft sighing of the sea, and speaking to each other in whispers.

Lallo, who managed to get a furtive peep through the corner of the covered-up window, was much comforted by the presence of such a crowd of sympathisers, and called to mind with satisfaction that at the last gwylnos in the village, there had not been so large a gathering.

Mari Vone sat on the low hedge of the cwrt, looking over the sea, where she was joined by Hugh Morgan and his wife.

"Canst hear, Mari?" he asked.

"No, nothing! But I've been listening to the sea, and I quite forgot the prayer-meeting, whatever."

Hugh opened his eyes, with a smiling pretence of reproof.

"Where is 'n'wncwl Jos?" he whispered;

and Mari pointed to the doorway. Hugh looked grave. "Is he going to stay to the gwylnos?"

"Yes," said Mari, with an uneasy look on her face.

"Wouldst like me to stay, lass?"

"Oh! no, Hugh bâch! and you hating a gwylnos as much as I do!"

"Twt, twt!" said Hugh, and he elbowed his way into the crowded passage.

The meeting was fortunately drawing to a close when Hugh entered, for the air in the small, close room was intolerably stifling. In the penucha he discovered the old man sitting close to the coffin, which stood across the fireplace. He had found the square hole in the boards, and had been able to get safely through the meeting without disturbing the gathering by the sound of his wooden leg, for in the soft earth he had been able to stump unheard.

"Well, Mishteer!" he said, when the dispersing of the crowd and the comparative emptying of the cottage enabled him to draw near his friend, "there's beautiful prayers we had! There's no doubt Sam Saer beats anyone in Mwntseison on his knees. Are you going to stop to the gwylnos?"

"Well, what d'ye think?" said Hugh. "'Tis shocking close here, and the room is too full. I think Lallo will be glad to get rid of a few of us. I'll stop if thou lik'st; but I was thinking perhaps thee and Mari would come in and have supper with us to-night. There's one of the

ducks since dinner got to be eaten, and we've tapped the fresh cask, and it's as clear as cryshal —thanks to thy secret, 'n'wncwl Jos!"

"Well, indeed, I think I will come," said the old man, "for I've sat by that coffin till I'm stiff. Good-bye, Lallo fâch!" he said, turning into the penisha. "I see you have so many friends here, I will only be in the way. Good-bye, Gwen fâch! I will be at the funeral to-morrow." And he searched his memory for one of the stock phrases which he tried to carry with him on such occasions. "Cheer up, merch i, and remember what the Bible says, 'Would God I had died for thee, my son!'"

When the Mishteer had piloted him safely into the soft evening air, he was rewarded by a look of gratitude from Mari's blue eyes.

"'N'wncwl Jos and you are coming to supper with us, Mari; he has agreed to come, so now don't you hold back."

"Oh, well, that's a good thing," said Mari, "for I have already promised Gwladys to come."

Lallo and her friends were already forming a semicircle around the bright fire, Gwen sitting straight and silent in the corner. Hour after hour of the long night they sat there talking, at first quietly and solemnly, but as the night wore on, and the contents of 'n'wncwl Jos's bottle was handed round, tongues were loosed and conversation flowed more freely.

Stories were told of "corpse candles" which wound their flickering way from cottage to

churchyard; of phantom funerals, in which the narrator had been so closely pressed by the unseen crowd as nearly to lose his breath, and become himself one of the mysterious company of "cwn bendith y mamman"—the weird invisible pack of hounds, whose yelping chorus rushes by on the wings of the wind; and many other tales, but always ending with the words, "but that was in the olden time, you know! Now, of course, we're wiser!" Their vaunted wisdom, however, did not prevent their cowering more closely over the blazing logs when the wind moaned in the chimney as it swept up the valley in the small hours of the morning, when one day was dead and the other was scarcely living. In the early morning, when the grey dawn came in as well as it could through the little covered window, everyone was glad to welcome it, and to blow out the candles which stood at the head of the coffin, to hang the kettle on the hook over the fire, and to help Lallo with her preparations for breakfast, returning without regret to the material pleasures of tea and buttered toast from their incursions into the realm of darkness and mystery.

On the third day after its death, the little one was laid to rest, followed by all the inhabitants of Mwntseison—for a funeral, no matter of how young a child, is an important function in Wales, and few within an area of two miles will fail to attend it, for there is a chance of hearing a sermon, and the certainty of an old Welsh hymn

or two; and if there be anything on earth calculated to move the feelings, and awaken sleeping memories, it is a Welsh funeral hymn. Its rising and falling strains, always in a minor key, are harrowing to the feelings of the bereaved; but by those not too closely interested, their emotional character is thoroughly enjoyed.

Lallo's small cottage was crowded, the throng overflowing into the garden and the road; and when the little coffin was carried out, and the large concourse of people, outside and in, joined in the funeral hymn, its wailing, dirge-like notes, rising and falling on the air, touched poor Lallo's heart beyond endurance, and she moaned and wept loudly, her sobs being accompanied by many a sympathising tear from the crowd; but Gwen walked beside her, silent and tearless, with a hard, angry gleam in her eyes.

"Poor thing! poor thing!" whispered the women; "she can't cry; there's a pity! She looks like Peggi Shân to-day!"

When, returned from the funeral, they reached their own door, one or two neighbours proposed to stay with her a few hours, but she coldly answered, "No, I don't want you," and, closing the door with a bang, bolted it noisily.

Left to herself, she looked vaguely round the cottage, and, turning to her mother, who had seated herself sobbing in the chimney corner, said, in a cold, hard voice:

"What are thou crying about, woman? It wasn't thy child upon whose coffin the clods fell

so heavily; they were not thine, those little hands that lay so stiff and white, that used to close so tight round my finger. What hast thou to cry about?"

"Oh, Gwen," said poor Lallo, "thou art a strange woman. Wasn't he mine, too? The very apple of my eye, calon fâch! There's sad news for poor Siencyn when he comes home next week! But God knew best what was good for him, and that is why He has taken him from us. The Bible says, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.'"

"Oh, silence with your texts! God, indeed! What sort of a God must He be who gave me a little baby to fill my empty heart, and then tore him cruelly away? Be quiet about your God, mother. If granny had been alive I would not have wanted help from God or man."

"Oh, Gwen, Gwen, hisht!" said the poor, bewildered woman; "I know it is hard to understand, but thou must bend before God, and say, 'He knows best.'"

"I won't," said Gwen, kicking at the embers which had gone out on the cold hearth. "He can do no further harm to me. My little one—born in lawful wedlock, too! not like thee, mother, nor granny, nor yet her mother!"

"No, indeed, it is true!" said Lallo, rocking herself backwards and forwards; "bad luck has followed us for generations. But thy father was a respectable man, Gwen; he is deacon in his chapel at Abersethin, and his wife and family

are the best dressed in Salem Chapel. Oh, yes, thou hast no need to be ashamed of thy father, though he did play me a scurvy trick in marrying Fani Hughes; but he couldn't help it, poor fellow! They say Fani's brother threatened to shoot him if he hadn't married her!"

"Perhaps your God took my child, then, to punish me for your sins," said Gwen, with a sneer.

"Sins!" said Lallo, opening her eyes. "'Twas a misfortune that might have happened to thee or anyone. Sins, indeed! That's the first time I have ever had *that* word thrown in my teeth!" and, much hurt, she began to rekindle the fire.

Gwen made no answer, but angrily pulled away the pocket-handkerchief which covered the little window. She spoke little during the day, and the following morning was at work in the sail-shed, pale and sulky, refusing every offer of help, and receiving the condolences of her neighbours with a silent contempt.

A few days afterwards the Mishteer wrote to Ivor Parry a letter in his round, firm hand, one that Ivor treasured for years, taking it out of his breast-pocket, sometimes, when the curling smoke from his evening pipe carried up in its wreaths thoughts and memories of the sweet and bitter past.

"Come back, mach-geni," it said. "I cannot do without thee. The work calls for thee, my heart calls for thee, and the work-people all

desire thy presence. Thou shouldst never have gone! there was no need. No new tie could ever loosen the cords of friendship that exist between thee and me. Nothing has gone well with me since thou art gone. I have had complaints of the work from several quarters. Sweet Gwladys is not well; and, truth to tell, I myself am wanting something, and it must be thee, lad, so come back to Mwntseison, and all will be well." In a postscript he added: "Of course thy pay shall be the same as that thou art receiving now. Indeed, I have raised the wages of all my best workmen."

And Ivor had answered:

"I will come, for I have quite failed to make my home at Carnarvon; and besides, if I can truly be of help to thee, nothing will keep me away. The Aden Ydon goes across next Monday, and I on board; but remember I will take no more pay than I have always had of thee. It was good pay, and I never wanted more; so fforwel till we meet."

Hugh was in good spirits next day, and came homewards at noon waving a letter round his head.

"Good news, Gwladys fâch! Ivor will be here next Monday, or Tuesday, or Wednesday at latest. Everything will be alright now. I feel like a new man," and so absorbed was he with the prospect of his friend's arrival, that he ate his dinner without noticing Gwladys' embarrassment.

"Next week! so soon should she be called upon to bear so much! so much bitterness, and alas! so much joy! But the joy *must* be smothered—be crushed out, and perhaps it would die some day."

She ate no dinner, and was thankful that Hugh did not notice the fact. From that moment a restless feeling took possession of her, and as the time for the arrival of the Aden Ydon drew nearer, she was consumed with a feverish dread of meeting Ivor.

Mari Vone often dropped in on one pretext or another, and though the subject uppermost in both their minds was never mentioned between them, she always left Gwladys more calm and courageous than when she entered.

On Monday the weather was dark and lowering, what wind there was blowing from the land, the waves scarcely breaking as they rippled on the shore.

"The Aden Ydon won't sail to-day," said Hugh, as he looked out under the thatched eaves of his window in the early morning. "But to-morrow, perhaps, the weather will have changed."

And so it was. On Tuesday the wind blew fresh and full from the north-west, and, standing at the door of the sail-shed, telescope in hand, Hugh watched for the first glimpse of the Aden Ydon's white sails.

"Yes, there she is!" he said, turning round to address his people. "Here, now, one of you

boys, run up and tell the Mishtress that Ivor Parry will be with us before to-night."

Gwladys tried hard to keep her thoughts from roaming out to that blue bay, which seemed to be more *en evidence* than usual to-day. Through every window and open door she saw it spreading fair and broad before her. The swish, swish of the waves filled her ears, the air was laden with its briny odour, and nearer and nearer from the dim blue hills, eighty miles away, came the white-winged ship that bore such a freight of sorrow for her.

"Oh, God forgive me!" she cried, whenever her thoughts went over those blue waters; and when, in the glow of the sunset, she saw the little ship sail in to land, and disappear round the cliff that towered high between Mwntseison and Abersethin, she fell on her knees under the wide chimney, and with hands crossed on her bosom, remained a few moments in silent prayer. She rose calmer, and endeavoured once more to busy herself in her household duties.

At last, when the evening shadows were closing in, and the glow in the west had faded away, she heard voices and footsteps coming down the opposite hillside, and across the wooden footbridge, and she knew that Hugh was returning from Abersethin, and was bringing Ivor with him.

Now the sound ceased, and she knew they were coming up the road. Her heart beat so violently that she felt suffocated, and went to

the doorway, partly to meet her fate and partly for a breath of air.

"What should she say?—how would he look? What would Hugh think if she should faint or falter? God help me!" she said as the footsteps came nearer, and in the twilight the two dark figures entered the cwrt.

"Here he is, Gwladys," said Hugh boisterously, "just come in to see thee on his way to his lodgings."

Gwladys blindly held out her hand, and Ivor took it in his.

"Well, Mishtress, and how are you?" he asked, in as cool a manner as he could command. A slight tremor in his voice was the only sign of feeling—there was not even the friendly "thee" and "thou." There was no tender, meaning glance—no pressure of the hand. She had not expected it—nay, would have resented it—but still the tone of indifference was painful to her, although she was perfectly aware it was assumed, and she answered in the same commonplace tones:

"I am well, thank you."

And Hugh filled up the silence that followed with his loud and hearty greetings.

"You will stay and have supper with us?" said Gwladys.

"Oh, no!" interrupted Hugh; "I am going to sup with him to-night. I will ask Mari to come and stay with thee."

"No," said Gwladys, "I would rather not. I

have enough to do to fill up my time to-night."

"Wel, nos da, Mishtress," said Ivor; and he and Hugh left, disappearing together through the gloaming.

Gwladys looked after them with a set white face, and then turned wearily up the stairs. Calling to Madlen, she said, in a calm voice:

"When the Mishteer comes in, tell him I was tired and went to bed."

On reaching her bedroom, she bolted the door, and, falling on the bed, gave way to a storm of tears.

"Oh, Hugh, Hugh!—my kind husband—oh! good friend and true!—why has God brought such sorrow upon thee? But, no! he shall not suffer—only me! only me!"

And then another flood of tears. She rose and went to the window, gazing silently at the leaden waters of the bay, silvered here and there by the moon, which was rising behind the village; then in a whisper she said:

"Ivor, Ivor! didst feel it as I did? Yes. I know by the tremble of his voice—'How are you, Mishtress?'—'I am well, thank you.' That is all—and that is all that must be between us. Ivor is strong and good—I must be the same!" And for the rest of the evening she lay still and thoughtful.

And thus began Gwladys' martyrdom—and no less that of Ivor's. To meet in the ordinary course of daily life, though not oftener than could

possibly be avoided, was a trial under which, at first, both suffered acutely; and Gwladys drooped and wilted visibly in the stress of the storm through which she was passing. She turned her face daily towards the path of duty, endeavouring to take up every thread of interest which her life presented to her, and to brighten her husband's path, even though her own had been stripped of all beauty and joy; and gradually she earned the reward of comparative calm and peace—a peace which added a new charm to her beauty—so much so, that the villagers often remarked—"Wel wyr! the Mishtress grows prettier every day."

Hugh rejoiced much in the cheerfulness which she seemed to have somewhat regained.

"'Tis thy coming back, mach-geni," he would say to Ivor sometimes. "I put every good down to that as I put every evil to thy going away."

And Ivor would push his hat further back on his head, and attack his work with more vigour, saying:

"I am glad, Mishteer, if it is so."

In the sail-shed, the work-people rejoiced to have him once more amongst them—the same as ever in his frank and genial manner, though much changed in outward appearance; for it was remarked by all how much his illness had aged him.

"Why, thee look'st ten years older, man!" they said, with the usual outspokenness of the peasantry.

And Ivor would only smile and say—"No

doubt, no doubt!" while he applied himself with extra care and interest in the Mishteer's concerns. Morning, noon, and night he was busy, apparently feeling that he could not do enough for his friend.

And once more in the sail-shed could be heard the swinging chorus of—

> "Torn sails and broken mast—
> But the boat is safe at home at last!"

CHAPTER X.

HUGH'S SUSPICIONS.

It was about this time that Gwen took to wearing her shawl over her head, held tightly with one hand under her chin, and appearing in it at all sorts of odd times and places. This, to an outsider, may not seem an event worth chronicling; but to anyone conversant with the inner life of a Welsh coast village, it is full of meaning. Where intermarriage is so common as it is there, peculiarities of character gather strength with every succeeding generation, and are affected by the most trivial circumstances; and thus it comes to pass that insanity is always lurking amongst the seeming calmness and rural simplicity of the village life, ever ready to pounce upon the harassed in mind and body. It is no uncommon thing to see in a small village containing two or three hundred inhabitants, two or three windows boarded and barred, behind which are kept the unhappy sufferers from this terrible fate. The dread of the asylum hangs like a cloud over the scene that appears such a picture of rustic happiness. The signs of increasing insanity are little

noticed by the villagers, it being considered courteous to ignore them as long as possible, so that the dreadful malady lurks about and shows itself unexpectedly when it is too late to cure it. One sign which is quickly noted, though never commented upon, is that of wearing the shawl in the case of a woman over the head instead of the shoulders, and the degree of insanity may be often gauged by the manner in which the shawl is held.

In case of a quarrel between man and wife, or between two neighbours, the woman whose temper has been most seriously ruffled appears next day with her shawl over her head, and held tightly under her chin, as a sign she is in no humour for frivolous conversation; and the sign is so interpreted by her friends and neighbours. So that when Gwen carried her red pitcher to the well in one hand, and with the other clutched her grey shawl under her chin, every one knew the death of her child was weighing sorely upon her, and they passed her with a nod only, or a formal "Da chi!" *

A few days later, the nod was not returned, but Gwen looked straight before her with a glitter in her eye and a set look on her lips which her neighbours noted with a sigh.

"Poor thing! poor thing! she's very bad. Lallo fâch! you must get Mari Vone in to chat a bit and hearten her up!"

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* Good-day!

Lallo shook her head mournfully.

"I don't like it at all, Madlen fâch. She will break her heart if she does not cry or something; never a word day or night, but just that silent, angry look. Indeed, what should I do if it were not for the pig? But even with him she seems to be offended!"

When, later on, Gwen not only appeared invariably hooded by her grey shawl, but held that shawl crossed *over her mouth*, she was observed with more serious and sympathising looks. A woman who had quarrelled with her husband would sometimes appear with a shawl held *under* her chin; but few except the insane held their shawl over the mouth, exhibiting only the nose and eyes. And as Gwen hurried through the village or roamed about the cliffs, she was followed by many a sigh and shake of the head. The village children, against whom she directed spiteful glances as she passed them on the shore or on the cliffs, soon learned to fear and hate her, and when she appeared amongst them they would fly in all directions like a flock of sparrows.

"Wel, wyr!" said Sara Pentraeth, as she looked after the miserable woman. "Peggi Shân has come back to Mwntseison, I think. Ach y fi! she looks angry with the sun himself."

Her place in the sail-shed was often unoccupied, and the Mishteer remarked upon it with reproof as well as pity in his tone, when one day she appeared, late in the afternoon, and sullenly

took her seat, and, after a few minutes' desultory work, rose and began her way to the open doorway.

"Stop, Gwen!" he said kindly. "What's the matter, merch i? Sorrow and hiraeth * we can all understand after such a loss; but what is the meaning of that anger and sullenness? Why, lodes,† art offended with the Almighty?"

"I am offended with you, Hugh Morgan! you have no business to speak to me as if I was a child, indeed, though you are the Mishteer."

"If you are a woman, Gwen, act like one, and remember that sorrow, if properly borne, may turn to a blessing."

"I want neither blessing nor cursing," said Gwen, "but only to be let alone. Go home, Hugh Morgan, and attend to your own affairs; you will find plenty to do with them," and she flung her shawl over her head and left the shed. Taking no notice of the scared looks of her fellow-workers, she walked homewards, straight and unbending, and passed her much-enduring mother in the cwrt without a word. Lallo looked after her sorrowfully, and went to the pig-stye door, over which she leant in a musing attitude for some time.

When the soft grey November days had commenced, "Tewi du bach," or the "little black weather," as it is called at Mwntseison, the sea looked still and dreamy under its sheeny leaden

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* Longing. † Girl.

surface, and the land seemed to lie in a cold swoon, for the summer and autumn were dead, and the sharp winter weather had not arrived; it was coming steadily and rapidly behind that grey haze which looked so calm and innocent on the north horizon of the bay. The boats were overhauled, and the nets were gathered in from the stretchers. As the evening shadows fell, over the steely glitter of the sea there came a rippling roughness, and an oily movement on the tide, which told its tale to the watchful fishermen. The doors of the sail-shed were closed, and down the grey beach the boats were pushed into the plashing waves; lights glimmered on the bay, and every man in Mwntseison was full of interest in the hauls of silver herrings which the boats brought to land.

"Come home and sup with me, Ivor," said Hugh, after one of their fishing excursions; "thou art tired out."

"Man alive!" answered Ivor, "am I fit to enter any clean house covered with tar and herring-scales like this? No, no, another time!"

"To-night it must be, or thou wilt offend me," said Hugh. "Go home and wash off thy herring-scales, lad, for I know Gwladys has a wheaten loaf and a fine lobster for supper; and I'll take no more of thy 'no, no's.'"

"Well, I'll follow thee," said Ivor, seeing a grave look in Hugh's face.

"I'll go and tell Gwladys thou art coming," said Hugh; and as he went up the uneven road,

carrying a string of herrings, he fell into a deep study—one of those reveries which had become rather frequent with him of late.

"What can be the matter with Ivor?" he thought. "What ails the man that he never darkens my door? I thought when once he came back we should be always together; but no —it is always 'not to-night, Hugh,' or 'another time, Mishteer.' I cannot make him out. And Gwladys, too! what ails her? When I say 'I will ask Ivor to come in to-night,' she never seems glad, but turns away without a word. Have they had any quarrel, I wonder? but no!" and again a shadow fell over his face, and an uneasiness crept into his mind, which had hitherto been a stranger there; but he chased it away as he entered the house and handed the herring to Gwladys to be fried for supper.

Ivor had tried so hard to put off his friend's frequent offers of hospitality. To-night he had no choice but to accept. When, cleaned and brushed, he entered the cottage, he would have given worlds to be able to rush away and hide his eyes from the sight which he knew awaited him there. Yes, there she was, busying herself with the arrangements of the simple supper, and, in the fitful light of the blazing log fire, looking more beautiful than ever, though paler and more pensive.

"Wel, Mishtress, I hope you are well," said Ivor, hurrying over the awkwardness of meet-

ing, while Hugh made him welcome with hearty greeting.

Gwladys' answer was low and rather unsteady. She set herself to her duties of hostess, and endeavoured to enter naturally into the conversation, but with very indifferent success, for which Hugh suddenly called her to account.

"Wel, wyr! Gwladys, Ivor will think he has come at an inconvenient time if thou art so thoughtful and silent. Come, lass, sprack up a bit, and give my friend a welcome, if thou hast none for me."

Never before had she heard the slightest tone of blame in her husband's words, and to-night the overstrained courage gave way for a moment, and her eyes filled with tears, while she offered her poor little excuses; but she quickly conquered her weakness.

"Indeed, Hugh, I am ashamed of myself; but Ivor knows I have not been well lately, and he will forgive me, and thou must, too."

"Why, of course, of course, merch i; I only want to see the smiles and roses come back to thy pretty face," and Hugh, as if trying to make amends for his slight tone of reproach, passed his arm round her waist, and drew her playfully towards Ivor. "Here she is, Ivor. Doesn't look as if we could be very angry with her, eh?"

Gwladys drooped her head shyly, though she tried to join in Hugh's merry laugh, while Ivor felt the blood rush to his head, and every pulse in his body beating painfully.

When they were at last seated at supper, Gwladys talked and laughed with unnatural excitement, her eyes gleaming, and her cheeks burning with even more than the old richness of colour. Suddenly a little sound or movement drew their eyes to the doorway, and there in the gloom stood a grey figure, silent, and with glittering eyes fixed upon the trio at the table.

"Ach y fi! Gwen, is it thee, then? Indeed, this is the second fright thou hast given me today. Wilt sit down to supper?" said Gwladys.

But Gwen only shook her head, and, pointing to Hugh, went into peals of laughter—laughter which they continued to hear as she left the house, and took her way homewards.

Hugh shuddered.

"I believe she's crazy," he said. "That laugh did not sound like that of a sane woman; and, since she has taken to wear that grey shawl over her head, she looks the image of her old grandmother. I believe it's the very shawl old Peggi Shân used to wear. No wonder the children call after her, 'Avaunt, witch!' I feel inclined to say the same myself."

"Wel, indeed, she frightens me often," said Gwladys. "In the garden or here by the fire, or leaning over the brewing tub, I look up, and there she stands, saying nothing, but just staring, staring at me; and her eyes seem to pierce me through and through."

"She has been distraught ever since her child died, I think," said Ivor; "but we must see to

her. She must not trouble the Mishtress in this way."

With the pardonable pride of a middle-aged husband, Hugh again drew Gwladys forward, saying:

"No, no, she sha'n't be troubled by anything! The best little woman that ever trod the sands of Mwntseison, in spite of her silent ways sometimes. Eh, Ivor?"

The latter felt he was expected to make some reply, while Gwladys stood flushed and perturbed before him. His lips were dry and parched, and his generally pleasant voice sounded harsh and hoarse as he answered:

"Wel, everybody knows that you picked the flower of Mwntseison; and everybody knows too, that only you, Mishteer, are worthy of her."

"Oh, halt there, lad, halt there! I think sometimes I have stolen her from a better man," and, as he loosened his arm from her waist, and seated himself at the supper table, a serious look came over his face, and a shadow seemed to have fallen upon his spirits. He had scarcely meant anything by his words; but even while he spoke there came to his mind a dim foreboding, and to his heart a sharp suspicion, of he knew not what, for he had not failed to notice the change in Ivor's manner—the difficulty with which he had brought out his words,—and, turning to look at Gwladys, he felt that those downcast eyes and that troubled face were not the signs of a young wife's pride in her husband's tender touch

and admiring praises. But he smothered the feeling, and applied himself to his supper, and the meal was gone through with some outward show of hilarity. Having finished, Hugh pushed the brown jug of ale towards his friend. "Wilt drink, lad?" he said. "Wilt drink to my health and Gwladys'?"

"I will keep to the meth,"* answered Ivor; "'tis the best I ever drank; it still tastes of the wild thyme and the sweet brier. Mishtress! here's to your good health and the Mishteer's, and long life and happiness to you both!"

There was a strange light in his eyes, as he stood with his head thrown back, the glass of meth in his hand, and as he drank down its contents, a deadly paleness spread over his face. Sitting down again he drew a long breath, and his hand trembled visibly as he replaced the glass on the table.

"Canst thank him, Gwladys?" asked Hugh, looking keenly at his wife, who shook her head with a smile on her lips which looked unnatural and strained.

"Well, I will, then! Ivor, they are fair *words*, none could be better, and I thank thee for *them*."

"Words!" said Ivor, starting to his feet, and stretching out his hand across the table, "Hugh Morgan! there are no words which could ever make plain my friendship for thee. Health and happiness to thee and thy sweet wife! God

* A drink made of fermented honey.

knows I would gladly shed my blood to bring it to thee!"

"Good, then!" said Hugh, taking his hand; "there's no more to be said. Art going? Well, it is late, I suppose. Nos da!"

"Yes, and a storm is rising. Nos da, Mishtress," said Ivor as he left the house.

It was true the storm was rising fast, dark clouds scudded over the moon, the wind moaned and wailed round the cliffs, the sea seemed to swell and lash itself into threatening fury, and Ivor felt the tumult of the elements accorded well with his feelings.

"Dear God!" he exclaimed, as he made his way through the buffeting wind, "I can never go through that again—never! never! not even to please thee, Hugh Morgan."

Meanwhile, in the cottage, Gwladys was clearing away the remains of the supper, and endeavouring by busy employment to cover the distressing awkwardness which her husband's manner had awoke in her. As she passed him sitting thoughtful under the chimney, he rose, and drawing her towards him, held her face between his two hands, and, gazing steadily at her:

"Dost hide any secret from me behind those brown eyes?" he asked, in a serious, tender tone; and before his honest black eyes her own quailed, and a deep crimson flooded her face.

Hugh slowly drew away his hands with a heavy sigh, without waiting for an answer.

All next day the storm gradually increased,

with a sullen persistency which seemed to threaten a more furious outburst for its tardy consummation. The wind soughed up the valley in fitful gusts; the sea seemed swelling with repressed anger. There was a heavy stillness in the air, in strange contrast with the flying clouds which passed at a high altitude from the north-west. Every cottage door was closed, the boats were safely moored, and the geese on the upland farms flew with loud cackling in flocks from one stubble field to another.

At the door of the sail-shed Hugh Morgan stood, lost in thought; the stormy atmosphere around him accorded well with the deep unrest which had taken possession of him. The dark suspicion which had darted into his mind on the previous evening had, with the suddenness of a flash of lightning, disclosed to him a truth, which, if it had ever before dawned upon his mind, had lain dormant, soothed to sleep by Gwladys' gentle ways and his own mad infatuation.

He and Ivor had met at intervals as usual in the course of the day's work, and each had felt that an undefined shadow had fallen between them; and of the two, Ivor had suffered most. He was conscious that in Hugh's mind had awoke a suspicion that he could never allay without a lie, for deep in his own heart he knew that his love for Gwladys was unquenchable and eternal. It was so with him, and nothing could alter the unhappy truth; he knew it, and he knew now

that his friend knew it; but there was another thing that Hugh did not know, and Ivor writhed under the impossibility of making clear to him the depth and reality of his own unswerving devotion to his friend. As he had tramped home the night before, he had evolved out of the turmoil of his thoughts one idea, which he clung to with some gleam of comfort; he must leave Mwntseison; he must part from Hugh Morgan; he must escape from the sight of Gwladys. He would close with the offer made him by Robert Rees, the miller. At Traeth-Berwen the old mill was to be let, as Robert had become wealthy and portly and lazy, and had offered to sell his business on very generous terms to Ivor Parry. Yes! he would take the old mill, and pass the rest of his days in the dreamy little valley. True, it was only a mile away, and he would still see Gwladys and Hugh on Sunday at Brynseion Chapel; and, moreover, perhaps she would come to the mill sometimes with the corn to be ground; but that would be better than seeing her every day. A sudden sharp stab is better than a continual probing! and he had seized a moment of respite from work to rush down to "The Ship," to catch Robert, and to settle the bargain with a slap of the hand and a blue of ale, and for the rest of the day he had felt somewhat less perturbed.

To Hugh, on the contrary, life seemed to hold out no loophole of escape from the miserable dread which had dawned upon him. At first he had been filled with a dull aching anger that an-

other man should dare to love his wife; and *that* man his friend, whom he had trusted—whom he had loved as a brother; and that he, Hugh Morgan, who had always been considered, and who thought himself, too calm and deliberate to be deceived, should thus have made a mistake in the most important step in his life! There was no anger against Gwladys.

"Poor child! poor child!" he was thinking, as he stood there at the door, with his hands clasped behind him; "it was not her fault; I see it all now. She never loved me—she loved Ivor; and I, fool that I was, thought my own love was enough, and would arouse the same feelings in her; but—thou hast been a fool, Hugh Morgan, and thou must open thine eyes now to thy folly, and make the best of a bad bargain. Well, this will help me to make up my mind on one point. I will leave the sail-shed, I will give up my business; I have enough and to spare, and poor Gwladys shall not be left so much alone." And he looked down the village road with gloomy forebodings in his dark eyes.

At this moment a large bunch of greenery came round the corner of the shed, and stooping under it, and looking through the golden and green leaves came Mari Vone, her shapely arms, crossed over her bosom, held the restraining cords which bound her bundle of bracken on her shoulders. Her brick-red petticoat made a spot of brightness in the gloomy landscape, and as she approached Hugh, her blue eyes looking out be-

tween the overshadowing ferns like harebells in the grass, even *his* sad face lightened as he met the sunny smile in the eyes, and marked the perfect lips and the dimpled cleft in the chin.

"Caton pawb! Mari, where'st been through the storm?" he asked, leaving the shed door, and accompanying her up the village road.

"Wel wyr! Now, thou'st never guess, Hugh. 'N'wncwl Jos had to go to Caer Madoc to-day to receive his pension, storm or no storm, so he borrowed Peggi Pentraeth's donkey-cart, and he does whip the poor donkey so. I hid the whip in the big furze bush by our house; but, oh, dir anwl! I couldn't hide his wooden leg, so I'm afraid he will use that instead. No, no! I will not loosen my bundle, so let it be. 'Tis a bed for the poor donkey to-night; I gathered it above Traeth-y-daran, for I knew the poor creature would be tired. Here's Peggi's donkey shed; wilt wait while I spread his bed for him?"

"Nay, I will come and help thee, lass." And in the little shed they spread the sweet fresh litter in readiness for the weary beast.

"Always comforting some poor, weary creature, thou art, Mari; 'twill be me next, lass. Hast any salve for a miserable man?"

"Hugh," said Mari, instinctively pressing her hand to her side, "what is it? Gwladys—is she ill?"

"No—what am I saying? Yes, she is sick—I am sick! Come home, lass, and let me tell thee."

And when they had strewn the litter of crisp bracken they went out together, and reaching her cottage door, Mari went in, Hugh following in silence. She pushed the rush chair towards him without speaking; and, leaning his elbow on the table, with his hands shading his eyes, he unburdened his mind to the ear which had never failed to listen with interest to every word that came from his lips. It was not a long story. A very few words served to reveal the dismal tale —alas, too common—of disappointed hopes and dire misgivings; of ruined happiness in two hearts caused by one foolish step.

"Yes," said Hugh, bringing his fist down heavily on the table, "I have been a fool, Mari —a blinded, headstrong fool! Had I been a boy, or even a young man like—like Ivor, there might have been some excuse for me; but a man of my age, one who had lived so long in quiet and wise solitude, and especially a man who had Mari Vone for his friend! Why didst not say to me," and he grasped her wrist fiercely, "'Stop, stop, Hugh, for she loves another'? *That* would have been real friendship, such as I thought thou hadst for me; but it seems I was wrong there too. I was mistaken in everything."

"I didn't know it, Hugh; indeed, I didn't know it!"

"Didst not?"

"No, indeed!" and the tears welled up into her eyes; but she resolutely kept them in check while she answered, "Hugh bâch, I am grieving

for thee; but there are two things thou canst be certain of in all this sea of trouble—my true and firm friendship, and that sweet Gwladys is as pure as an angel."

To this Hugh made no answer, but continued for some time brooding darkly, while Mari sought in vain for any words that might comfort him. At last he spoke.

"I am getting tired of my life, Mari—tired of myself. Everything seems wrong with me, and I feel like the outside world around me these days, full of suppressed storm and unrest. It is not only Gwladys' want of love for me, not only that; but I myself am wrong. I am dissatisfied with myself. Come, guardian angel, and tell me what to do!"

"What is it, Hugh bâch?" said Mari, standing tall and fair beside him, and looking down with eyes of love and pity upon the storm-tossed man, who sat with his elbow leaning on the table, and his hands shading his troubled eyes.

"No! 'tis not Gwladys only who does not love, but I myself have changed. I, who thought my love for her was unchangeable and true, have awoke to find it was only a tempestuous passion which laid hold of me and carried me away, until I was cast shipwrecked and torn and broken against the rocks. Wilt despise me, Mari, when I tell thee that Hugh Morgan, who thought he loved his young wife, has ceased to do so? At the first dawn of suspicion, his love died out. Pity, deep pity, and the tender love of a father

for his child, or an elder brother for his sister—that I still feel; but the passionate ardour with which I began my married life is gone—died suddenly, Mari—never to live again. Thou art silent, lass, because thou art sorry to hurt thine old friend by telling him how thou despisest him."

Mari laid her hand gently on his bowed head. Her heart was strangely moved within her; she would have been more than human had she felt no joy at hearing that the love which she had craved for all her life—if not hers—was, at all events, not another's! But the strongest feelings that prompted her words were sympathy for him and for Gwladys, and an earnest longing to comfort them.

"Thou art altogether wrong, Hugh; I do not despise thee, but pity thee, and sympathise—oh! with my whole heart. Thou hast not ceased to care for thy wife; it is only the passion, the earthly part of thy love, that has died out. The best part, the enduring, wise love remains, and will remain for ever, to guard sweet Gwladys—to comfort her and to guide her; for after all, Hugh, she is but a child, and thou must be very gentle and patient with her. I am as fond of her as if she were my own sister."

"Keep close to her, Mari fâch!" said Hugh, rising, "for she will need all thy tenderness—and I, too, Mari," and he held out his brown hand. "Don't turn me out of thine heart."

She took his hand in both her own, and pressed it in a warm clasp.

"Never, Hugh! while life shall last!"

"Right, merch i!" was all Hugh's answer, as he stooped his head under the low doorway. He turned back for a moment, while she still stood pensive at the table. "The old spar is drifting amongst the waves at present, Mari; thou must help to guide it into calm waters."

She looked up from the finger with which she had been absently writing on the table.

"I will, Hugh! Galon wrth galon!" *

When Hugh returned to the sail-shed it was to hear the astonishing news that Ivor Parry was about to break off his connection with the sail-making, and to enter upon the less arduous duties of a miller's life.

"Well, indeed," said Hugh, with forced cheerfulness, "this will be a day to be remembered by the gossips, for I, too, have a piece of news to give you." And raising his voice a little, so that everyone in the shed could hear him, he continued, "I meant to have called a meeting this evening to let you know that I am thinking to give up my business; but as Ivor Parry has already fired the pistol, I need not be afraid to let off the gun! Joshua Howels and I have had many talks on the subject, and I have now made up my mind to give up the sail-shed to him. I have made enough money to keep my wife and myself in comfort as long as we two live, and therefore I will not stand in the way of another man's do-

* "Heart to heart!"—A Druidical motto.

ing the same thing. Now, I want you not to make any remarks about this to me to-night. You know I am one of those foolish creatures who cannot spend the greater part of every day under the same roof with other people without letting them into his heart, and I don't want you to think little of me at the last. So, anwl frindiau,* let us go on quietly, until some evening I slip out silently after work, and Joshua Howels comes in next morning instead of me. We need not say good-bye, as I am not going away from Mwntseison, and I have no doubt that, whenever I have an hour to spare, my feet will turn naturally towards the old sail-shed, so that we shall meet often; only, I will not be the Mishteer any longer."

Here his voice was drowned by an uproar of voices, and cries of "Mishteer! Mishteer!" filled the air.

"There has never been another Mishteer in Mwntseison," cried somebody in the crowd, "and there can never be another!"

The warm Welsh hearts of his work-people were touched to the quick by his evident emotion at parting with them. When they saw him reach down his straw hat, and turn towards the little office opening out of the shed, and they realised the meaning of the speech, a hush fell upon them more eloquent than words.

The Mishteer was unstrung. He was sor-

* Dear friends.

rowing at parting with them. There was a moisture in his eyes, the tears were not far off—and all for them; and as they dropped their voices, and passed silently out through the big doors, Hugh Morgan had never been so completely master of their hearts.

Of course, next day Mwntseison was moved from hearth to roof—from the Methodist chapel on the cliffs to the little church on the top of the hill. Over the whole neighbourhood the news was spread abroad, and amongst others, Nell Jones and Sara Pentraeth had met early to exchange ideas. Their washing had been hurried over in a very perfunctory manner, in the desire to reach the "hanging-out" stage of the proceedings; and as good luck would have it, just as Nell began to spread out her heavy Welsh flannels, Sara came out too with her basket, and they were soon engaged in deep conversation over the low hedge of blackened broom bushes which divided their sandy gardens.

"Nell fâch, didst ever hear of such a thing? There's news! there's an odd thing! that the Mishteer should change his mind like that—and all of a sudden, too! And, Nell anwl, to be handed over to Josh Howels like a bowl of cawl! Ach y fi!"

"Will he pay us as well? that's the thing!" said Nell; "for I've heard tell he's a man who wants the penny and the pen'orth!"

"Perhaps indeed! shouldn't wonder; he is nearly related to his father, and we all know what

he was! But there's one good thing, we sha'n't have to call Gwladys 'Mishtress' any more—Mishtress indeed! with her airs and her pride. Ach y fi! shoes, if you please, instead of clocs!" and, with another expressive "ach y fi," she flung a garment over the hedge so roughly as to tear it, thus adding to her own irritation. "Madam's pride will come down now, Nell fâch; for two women, whose grandfathers and great-grandfathers have lived at Mwntseison, to have to say Mishtress to Nani Price's daughter is very hard; for who was Nani Price's father, I should like to know?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Nell. "What does that matter? and, indeed, I can't say I have seen any pride in the Mishtress."

"Oh, dir anwl!" said Sara spitefully, "who could show pride to a poor, humble creature like thee. I have seen how thou hast flattered and fawned upon her; but I don't think thy porridge will be any the thicker for it. As for me, I never cringe to anyone. I can hold up my head with anyone in the village. My father was never suspected of sheep-stealing, and my uncle's wife's brother never had occasion to keep accounts to satisfy his master. No! nor my mother never promised to make a quilt for four shillings, and then charge six shillings for it!"

This last thrust, alluding to something that was within Nell's memories, was unbearable.

"Dost dare to say that my father stole sheep?" she said, with arms akimbo, and looking

with flashing eyes across the broom hedge. "Dost dare to say my uncle's wife's brother stole his master's money? I'll have the law upon thee as sure as——"

"The law!" said Sara. "I defy the law, and thee into the bargain! I never *said* thy father stole a sheep. I only said *my* father never did. No! and I'll tell thee another thing—*my* daughter never tripped on her way to the marriage market!"

At this last shaft, poor Nell was completely crushed, and finished spreading out her flannels in silence, while Sara retired up the garden with flying colours.

CHAPTER XI.

THE STORM.

"Wild waves, where are you flowing
Out on the seething bay?
Wild wind, what are you doing
Tearing the sea and tossing the spray?
There the storm bells are pealing,
There the sea-gulls are wheeling,
And the cabin-boy kneeling,
Out on the seething bay."

THE next day the storm, which had threatened Mwntseison for days, was at its height. During the night the wind had increased into a furious gale, lashing the foaming waves up the sides of the cliffs, rushing up the narrow valley, and carrying huge lumps of foam into the fields above the village. Lying awake, Gwladys listened, dry-eyed, to the roar of the sea and the shriek of the wind. Every hour since that critical moment when Hugh had looked into her eyes, and they had quailed before his, seemed to bring but an access of misery to her heart. Her husband's tenderness had not failed—indeed, the tones of his voice were even more gentle than before; but she was too conscious of a subtle

change, the cause of which she knew too well. Hugh no longer trusted her—no longer loved her! He was as fully aware of the state of her feelings towards Ivor as though she had told him in plain words, "I love him, and I have never loved thee as I ought." Oh, the pity of it! that she could not fling her arms about his neck and say, "Hugh, it is not true; it is a foolish fancy of thine! I love thee with all my heart," and, as she looked at Hugh's sleeping form beside her, she would have given worlds to be able thus to reassure him—but she could not. He tossed restlessly on his pillow, and she listened to his mutterings.

"What shall I do, Mari?" he murmured, in his sleep. And Gwladys knew that in the bitterness of his heart he was seeking comfort from Mari Vone.

When the morning broke, she rose, listless and weary, and, leaving Hugh still sleeping, went downstairs and busied herself with the preparations for breakfast. As she drew back the wooden bolt of the house door, it was pushed open from without, and Gwen came into the passage, as usual wrapped in her grey shawl. She looked pale and haggard, and her eyes gleamed fiercely as she brushed roughly past Gwladys, and preceded her into the kitchen. She seated herself on the settle under the chimney, where Madlen was kindling the fire.

"Thou art up early to-day, Gwen," said Gwladys, a little trembling in her voice, for a

restless night had already shaken her nerves. "Wilt stay for breakfast with us?"

"Why, no; of course not! I have breakfast at home, and want none of thy charity. Where's the Mishteer?"

"He's still sleeping. Dost want to see him?"

"Oh, no, let him sleep," said Gwen; "he will awake some day." And her eyes, small and glittering as a snake's, followed Gwladys as she busied herself with her household duties.

She tried to throw off the fascination of Gwen's look, but wherever she went she felt oppressed by that basilisk stare.

"What makes thee so pale and downcast?" Gwen said at last. "Everyone thought that when thou wert the wife of Hugh Morgan thou wouldst be the brightest and happiest in Mwntseison; but instead of that thou look'st like a white storm-driven pigeon. Come out in the rain with me; 'twill suit thee better than all these comforts. Has Hugh Morgan begun to repent of his bargain yet?"

"What dost mean?" said Madlen, standing before her with arms akimbo, "coming here, indeed, to insult the Mishtress before she's had a bit or a sup inside her? Get thee out, Gwen, if thee hasn't pleasanter words in thy tongue."

"Oh, I am going," said Gwen, standing up and backing gradually towards the doorway, with her eyes still fixed on Gwladys, who felt frightened and trembling, "out in the wind and rain. 'Tis a braf morning." And with one of her long

uncanny peals of laughter, she left the house, and Madlen bolted the door.

"There," she said, with satisfaction, "let her go to her wind and rain. Tan i marw! * I'm afraid of her."

When Hugh came down, he entered upon the subject of his intended retirement from business.

"'Twill be better for thee, merch i," he said, "than being so much alone. Perhaps I have been wrong to leave thee here all day to fret thyself. I will try not to be in the way of the household work, Gwladys"

"Oh, Hugh," said the girl, her voice trembling with emotion, "thou hast not left me to fret. Thou hast filled my life with kindness; thou hast been everything to me—husband, friend, brother,—and I will try—oh, I will try!—to be all I can to thee. Have patience with me, Hugh." And, with timid attempts at reconciliation, she surrounded him with little nameless attentions, piling his plate with the frizzled ham, cutting thin slices of bread and butter from the long barley loaf, and stooping herself to tie his shoe strings; but Hugh's thoughts were absent, and he took no notice of the little tendernesses. The cloud was on his brow and the dark shadow of suspicion in his heart, and, though his words were as kind, perhaps more so than ever, there was an absence of the loving look and the warm embrace, which cut his young wife to the quick.

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* If I die!—A common exclamation.

After he had left the house, she flung herself down in the rush chair in the chimney corner, and, with her hands clasped listlessly on her lap, she mused long and sorrowfully, making no answer to Madlen's frequent allusions to the storm.

"There's yellow the sea is," said the latter, peeping out through the little side window, which looked down to the bay. "All the sand in the bay is mixed with it, and oh, anwl! the waves are rising as high as steeples! Wel wyr!"

Gwladys still sat on in a turmoil of miserable thought. What was to become of her? How should she bear the long life before her, always mistrusted by her husband, and always fighting with this terrible dear love for Ivor, which haunted her sleeping or waking, in the garden, on the shore, or at her household duties? and "I am so young! If I were old there would be some hope of an end of it. But so young—only twenty! It is impossible! I cannot bear it!" and in a paroxysm of bitter trouble she started up, and, flinging an old grey shawl over her head and shoulders, she went quickly out through the back door and into the sandy garden. She would battle with the wind and the storm! It would not be worse than the turmoil of thoughts within, which made her heart ache and her head burn. Out in the garden the wind almost took her breath away. The blackened broom bushes in the low hedge which separated the garden from the cliffs seemed to bend threateningly towards her; but she pushed her way through them. The

long grass, beaten down by the pelting rain, obstructed her footsteps; but she hurried on persistently, almost unconsciously, scarcely feeling the cruel stings of the driving rain in her face, and struggling with the fierce wind, which clutched at her dripping garments and dragged her backwards.

"But I will go!" cried the girl, as she fought her way over the cliffs, sometimes stopping to take breath, but again resolutely renewing her battle with the storm. Where was she going? She knew not—cared not; but somewhere—anywhere—away from herself and the pitiless circumstances which pressed upon her! Yes; Gwen was right. The storm and the wind and the rain suited her better than the warm hearth and the kind voice of her husband.

Could she reach Traeth-y-daran? There she would sit on the rock where Ivor and she had spent their last hours together. Perhaps there she would find peace, for in vain she had sought it in prayer and supplication. She knew if she were once able to make her way down the dangerous path to the shore, the last step, which would be of necessity a leap of ten feet, would render a return impossible. A dim perception of this ran through her mind; but the frenzy which had taken possession of her sought only for its goal—oblivion, and a termination of her sufferings.

In calmer moments she would not have dared to tread that dangerous path in a high wind, but

to-day she seemed possessed by some wild spirit of unrest, which drove her forwards and impelled her flying feet on—on—till the edge of the cliff was reached, and still on, down the dangerous, zig-zag path, clinging to the stunted bushes. Slipping, stumbling, and yet pursuing, she made her difficult progress, and when the path ended abruptly at the top of a smooth, perpendicular rock, she did not hesitate for a moment, but took the leap with streaming hair and swirling garments, and alighting on the beach below, sped onwards across the wet sands to where the low rocks still lay uncovered by the in-coming tide. At last she had reached her goal, and, flinging herself down, she gave way to the tears which she had hitherto restrained. Every moment seemed to add to the fury of the storm.

"Oh, wind, it is for me you are wailing and shrieking! Oh, rain, 'tis for me your tears are falling!" and she mingled her own passionate sobs and cries with the stormy sounds around her. Here she could cry aloud in her despair, for there was no one to hear—no one but God. "Does he hear me?" and she paused for a moment and looked out at the boiling, seething cauldron before her, and up to the streaming sky; but her survey brought her no comfort. "No, He does not! No! no! I am alone—alone!"

At that moment a huge wave broke with thundering force at a little distance from the shore, and, helped by the wind and in-rushing tide, it reached far up the beach, even to the

rock on which Gwladys sat; and for the first time she realised that, in taking that flying leap, she had cut herself off from every chance of escape. As she watched the huge, curling waves rushing one after another towards her, a strange joy rose within her. She would be drowned!—and here would end all the sorrow and all the sin which had made the last three months of her life so intolerable to her.

How had she dared to think God had not heard her?—for here was the answer to her prayers. He was going to take her to Himself—to calm her troubled breast and to unloose the tangled skein of her life! And leaning back, her head on a bed of brown sea-weed, she set herself to wait for death—the great consoler. But when the cold streams of water reached her, and, encircling the rock, began to splash her face, already wetted by the rain, she moved a little further up the beach.

"Not just yet," she thought; "I must have time to ask for pardon, and to say good-bye to Ivor and dear Hugh!"

And again she threw herself back on the wet sea-weed—as wet and sodden herself as was her cold bed.

Steadily the tide came up—not slowly and gracefully as in the quiet summer mornings and evenings, but with rapid strides and far-reaching, foaming arms, that seemed to stretch out hungrily towards her. She closed her eyes as the drenching rain fell on her face, and with clasped

hands waited—but not for long. For soon the roar became louder, the wind blew more fiercely, and once more she moved further up the beach, until at last there was only a small strip of sand under the cliffs left bare.

Gwladys rose, and wearily gained the narrow strand, and, seeing that the swirling tide already swept over it, she took her stand, leaning against the rocky wall, and once more prepared to wait her doom. Suddenly there was a break in the leaden sky, and while the waves now reached her ankles, the drift widened, and the sun peeped out and cast a fitful gleam on the tossing waves. It was only a gleam, but enough to waken in Gwladys the natural instincts of youth, which had slept within her lately. After all, life was dear! It was better to live miserable than to die miserable! After all, life might hold some solution of her perplexities; God might lighten her burden —to Him nothing was impossible. But it was too late! Already the water reached her knees, and many a wave splashed even over her head.

Meanwhile, in the sail-shed, Hugh and Ivor worked each at his own special work, avoiding each other as much as possible, but still showing no other sign of disturbance.

"I see Captain Roberts at 'The Ship.' Will I go and tell him his sail is done, Mishteer?" said Ivor at last, standing square and straight at the door of the little office.

"Yes," answered Hugh, "if thou canst get there through the storm."

"Twt, twt," was all Ivor's answer as he tied the ears of his cap under his chin. In a few minutes he had reached "The Ship" Inn, and delivered his message, having done which he came out again into the wind and rain. From the door of "The Ship" one could see over the jutting point which hid Traeth-y-daran from the rest of the shore; and Ivor, looking across the stormy waters, seemed struck by something he saw there.

Surely that was a human figure standing up against the bare rock! Yes, the grey form of a woman!—Gwen, no doubt—and she would be drowned for certain, unless he could save her. A few moments he stood uncertain, until, looking round him, he espied a man who slouched up the road to meet him.

"Hello, Will! is that thee, lad? Wilt come with me to Traeth-y-daran?"

"Ay, ay!" shouted the man in return, for the storm was too loud for the ordinary voice to be heard. He was one of those unfortunate creatures so common along the coast—a harmless idiot—a mental state politely described in the neighbourhood as "not wise!" He was always ready to risk his life, of whose value he was but dimly conscious.

Ivor knew it would be useless to ask anyone else to dare with him the fury of that boiling sea, "unless, indeed, Hugh was here," he thought, as he pushed out his boat, regardless of the entreaties of the knot of

idlers who had immediately gathered round him.

"Here's the Mishteer!" said somebody, and Hugh was hastily making his way through the buffeting wind and spray.

"Come out, Will," he cried; "I will go." And laying hold of the boat, he prepared to leap in, but was pushed back by Ivor.

"Not thee, Hugh. Will and I are enough to risk our lives on yon boiling pot. Hast seen the woman?"

"Yes," said Hugh—"that mad Gwen in her grey shawl." And he still kept his hand on the boat. "Let me be, lad—I am not going to let thee go alone."

"Back!" shouted Ivor, endeavouring to spring past Hugh, who clutched at him and struggled to leap in. There was a moment's wrestling between the two men, each heated by his own passionate will and the new-born spirit of antagonism between them, until at length, "Remember thy wife!" cried Ivor; "I have no one to leave behind—back, man!" And with a violent thrust, he flung Hugh splashing prone in the shallow tide, and, springing into the boat, he pushed it from the shore, while Hugh rose angrily from his undignified position.

"Fool!" he cried, looking at the receding boat; "he will be drowned, as sure as he's there!"

"That's what he knows, Mishteer," cried a man in the crowd. "That's why he won't let

you go with him. Tan i marw! I think you must both be tired of your lives!"

"As for me," said another, "I should say if Gwen put herself into that pickle, let her come out of it!"

"Why, man," said a third, "how can she get out of it? That wild sea before her, and a straight rock as smooth as a wall behind her!"

"Twt, twt!" said the first speaker, "Peggi Shân would come and help her! There he goes round the point, now he will be in the strame of the storm! Poor fellow—druan bâch!"

"Druan a Gwen, too!" said the women. "I hope he will reach her."

"He will reach her safe enough," said Hugh; "now that he has turned the point the tide will be with him; but coming back will be the difficulty!"

And with straining eyes they watched for the reappearance of the tiny craft.

"Where was the woman, Mishteer?"

"At the further end of the shore, standing straight against the rock. You can see her from 'The Ship' door; the tide must already have been up to her knees, poor soul! What frenzy made her go to Traeth-y-daran of all places? for she knew there was no returning from there!"

The rift in the clouds had grown larger, there was a streak of blue sky and a stream of sunlight shining through upon the troubled sea, and suddenly round the point and in a patch of light the boat appeared, labouring and tossing like a

cockle shell upon the stormy waters. The sight was greeted by a loud shout from the crowd, which the roaring wind seemed to drive back into their throats.

Hugh's relief was intense, as deep as had been his terror, lest he might never see his friend again.

"God bless him!" he murmured, straining his eyes eagerly, while the little boat rose and fell between the billows; "there is Gwen in a grey heap at his feet."

And shout after shout from the people welcomed each appearance of the frail boat as it rose from the trough of the sea.

Will and Ivor rowed bravely; but skill was of little avail in such a storm. They had reached Traeth-y-daran in a lull of the wind, and, sheltered a little by the encircling rocks, had not found much difficulty in reaching the woman, who stood apparently calmly waiting her doom like a martyr at the stake.

Gwladys saw the boat approaching, and quickly recognised Ivor as her rescuer; and her blood, which had seemed frozen in her veins, began once more to circulate; the heart which had beaten so faintly bounded up, and fluttered back to life; and the eyes, which had closed in a last prayer, became suffused with warm tears.

As for Ivor, when, reaching the strand, he became aware that it was Gwladys, and not Gwen, whom he had come to deliver, he almost dropped his oar in speechless horror.

"Gwladys' tender form to be beaten by the

pelting rain and dashing spray! Gwladys to be there alone in peril! What did it mean?" And sodden and wet as he was, a burning tide of heat rushed through his frame, as a dim intuition of the cause flashed into his mind; but there was no time to ask, for he saw that upon recognising him the strained courage was giving way. A huge wave rolled in and washed over her, and in its backward flow bore the frail figure away with it.

Ivor sprang into the tide as she was carried past him, and, catching her in his arms, lifted her safely into the boat, where she fell in a crouching heap at his feet.

"Safe so far, thank God!" he said, and only waiting to lift aside the dark brown hair which covered her face, and to rest her head on a coil of ropes, he bent at once to his oar, and turning the prow of the boat round, he and Will strained every nerve to reach the point, where they knew their greatest danger lay, and where the tide and wind together played havoc with the seething waters.

The tide of life was already returning to Gwladys' chilled body, for she was young, and accustomed to Nature's various moods. Not a word passed between her and Ivor; his eyes were fixed upon the sea, whose dangers he was endeavouring to battle with—not for dear life for himself, but for *her* who was dearer than life itself. Once only he looked at her.

"Art recovering, Mishtress?"

"Yes," she answered faintly.

"Thank God!"

They relapsed into silence, for, even to hear her faint answer, he had been obliged to stoop close to her, so loud was the roar of the wind and sea. As they neared the point, even Will became conscious of his danger.

"We'll drown, I think!" he shouted.

"But don't stop rowing," cried Ivor.

Indeed, it seemed impossible that such a tiny craft should ever make its way in safety over that rough sea. The waves ran mountains high, and each one, as it rolled in upon them, threatened to engulf them.

Gwladys rose upon her knees sometimes, but sank down again in terror at the sight which met her gaze.

They had now reached the patch of sunlight on the water, and the tide and wind helped them onwards towards the beach.

Hugh watched them eagerly from the shore.

"Brave lad," he cried, "he will do it, I believe!"

At this moment somebody touched his arm, and, turning, he beheld—Gwen, her grey shawl over her head, and held over her mouth, her small eyes gleaming fiercely at him. She asked:

"What is this fuss about?"

Hugh gasped.

"Gwen!" he said. "Mawredd anwl!* what

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* Merciful God.

is the meaning of this? Another of thy witch ways! Tell me, woman—art thou in that boat, or here? No more of thy mad tricks!"

"Mad tricks?" said Gwen fiercely. "What dost mean, Hugh Morgan?"

"Yes, mad tricks," said Hugh angrily. "Didn't I see thee half an hour ago on Traeth-y-daran, with the waves dashing round thee? and hasn't Ivor Parry ventured his life in that cockle shell to save thee?"

"Mad, indeed!" replied Gwen, bringing her white face close to his. "Who is maddest—thee or me, Hugh Morgan? Dost think Ivor Parry would risk his life to save *me?* It was not me who ran so wildly over the cliffs through the wind and rain to-day. I am not the only one, I am glad to say, whose heart is burning and aching. Look nearer home, man. If I am mad, *I* never left the girl who loved me all her life to marry a croten * of a girl who did not love me, and who loved somebody else. 'Tis *thou* art mad, Hugh Morgan, and 'twas thy wife Gwladys who ran through the storm to Traeth-y-daran this morning," and she burst into one of the long shrieking fits of laughter which had latterly become the terror of Mwntseison.

Hugh looked at her in horrified amazement. His mind was a chaos of troubled thoughts, and, as a shout from the crowd caught his ear, he turned again to watch the boat, but it was gone.

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* Slip of a girl.

There had been a slight lull in the storm, during which Will and Ivor had striven hard to reach the shore; but the wind rose again, and the sea, as if regretting its momentary gentleness, suddenly increased in violence. A monstrous wave, towering higher than any that had hitherto assailed them, came rolling with foaming crest towards the boat. Ivor and Gwladys realised at the same moment that to escape its powerful mass was impossible. With one impulse they stood up.

"'Tis death!" cried Gwladys.

"But together!" answered Ivor, as he clasped her in his arms; and together they were washed out of the boat, and carried away by the rushing wave.

Will struggled for a while to keep afloat but soon sank, never to appear again. The excitement on the beach was intense. They were now aware that it was not Gwen for whom Ivor had risked his life, for she was amongst them, and they looked round to see who was missing.

In the seething, foaming inrush of waters, the tossed and struggling figures clasped in each other's arms were sometimes visible, rolling over and over, but ever carried nearer to land.

"Where are they?" shouted Hugh Morgan. "Show me, for heaven's sake, for I am blind and mad, I think!"

"There, there, Mishteer," explained several voices at once; "out there where the floating buoy is fastened."

And Hugh, catching sight of the rolling figures for a moment, dashed headlong into the waves, in spite of the restraining hands of his workmen, who thought he was going to certain death.

"Mishteer, Mishteer! come back!" cried 'n'wncwl Jos; but Hugh did not hear. Already he was caught in the swirling waters, and the old man, forgetting everything but his frenzied fear for the Mishteer's life, dashed in after him, but only to be caught on the crest of a thundering wave, and to be rolled over and over like a cork on the foaming waters. The sea would have none of them that day, the strong tide and the fierce wind both setting landwards.

'N'wncwl Jos was quickly carried in far enough for Dyc Pentraeth to grasp him and drag him into safety.

"Come up, thou old fool!" he said. "Dost think we can do without thee and thy wooden leg?"

'N'wncwl Jos shook himself like a wet dog, and would have rushed in again had he not seen Hugh at that moment flung like a broken spar on the beach. He rose in a minute, and as he rose he saw the forms of Ivor and Gwladys borne in on a crest of a wave, and left upon the sands almost at his feet. They were at a little distance from the small crowd, Gwen alone stooping with Hugh over the sodden figures.

"Who is mad now? Gwen or Hugh Morgan?" she asked, in biting, sneering tones. "Let

them alone, Mishteer,"—and she laid her hand on his fingers, which were already endeavouring to loosen the strong grip of the half-drowned Ivor and Gwladys—"let them alone; 'tis as it should be!" she added.

"Away, you devil!" cried Hugh, battling with his bitter agony. And Gwen left him with one of her usual fits of laughter.

Hugh's fingers trembled visibly as he loosened the coils of Gwladys' brown hair, which had twisted round and round Ivor's face.

"The water is cold," he said apologetically, and his trembling voice and chattering teeth were accounted for; but when the long hair was disentangled, and the clutching fingers loosened from their frantic grasp, there were ejaculations of horror and astonishment from the sympathising onlookers.

"The Mishtress! howyr bâch! how did she get there? Druan fâch! there's white she is! And Ivor, too! Surely there will be no awakening for him. So still, so white! but with a smile on his face. Dost see it, Mari fâch?"

But Mari was busy with Gwladys. Tenderly the fragile form was carried up the road and into her own home, while Ivor was borne with no less loving care to his lodgings, where the proper means of restoration were, before long, successful in bringing him back to life, and the crowd waiting outside turned up the road towards the Mishteer's house.

"How did the Mishtress get there?" was now their eager question.

This seemed likely to remain an unsolved mystery, for as Mari Vone came gently down the stairs to answer their frequent inquiries, her reassuring accounts of Gwladys' awakening and recovery stopped short at this interesting point.

"Mari fâch," said Sara Pentraeth, in a voice made hoarse by the excitement of the morning, "tell us, Mari fâch, how did the Mishtress get there?" and in her eagerness she ran up two or three stairs, and reached with clawing fingers towards Mari's skirts.

"She is better," said Mari, coming down the stairs; "the Mishteer is with her, and begs you all to go home quietly. The Mishtress will be well in a day or two; but she is too frightened to answer any questions yet."

And, reluctantly, they were compelled to control their curiosity for the present, satisfying themselves by turning again towards Ivor's lodgings, where they lingered about all day until relieved by the information that his strong frame was battling bravely for life, and that probably after a night's sleep he would be himself again.

Gwladys had opened her eyes and returned to consciousness with a quiet calmness which was absent from Ivor's recovery. The return of life and warmth to the body which has so nearly severed its connection with the soul is often a painful experience, and especially in the case of partial drowning. He had returned to conscious-

ness with much struggling and groaning, and when he realised that the old life of thwarted hopes and bruised feelings had once more to be encountered, the groans, which those around him attributed to bodily pain, were caused by the fresh awakening to mental anguish.

"Gwladys! where is she?" were his first words.

"Safe at home, and getting right rapidly."

He said no more, but quietly seconded the efforts of those around him to restore him.

Meanwhile, Hugh Morgan sat silent and thoughtful beside his young wife's bed, holding her hand in one of his, while with the other he occasionally smoothed away the brown locks, which, in drying, resumed their tendency to curl and wave about the snowy forehead, while Mari Vone came and went with gentle words and tender smiles.

"There's a good girl!" she said, as Gwladys returned an empty cup of some steaming concoction which she had swallowed in quiet obedience.

The brown eyes looked up gratefully, but there was no answering smile on the red lips. Only when Mari had retired for a moment, she raised Hugh's hand and pressed a silent kiss upon it, and as she let it drop again, a tear rolled down her cheek. It caught Hugh's glance at once, and, with almost womanly tenderness, he wiped it away. She opened her lips to speak,

but Hugh placed his finger playfully upon them, saying:

"Not a word, merch i, until thou art well. To-day and to-night thou must be quiet, Dr. Hughes says, and to-morrow thou may'st talk to thine heart's content."

CHAPTER XII.

UNREST.

"Pen addysg pan oeddwm, i'r gwyrdd-ddail mi gerddwn,
A'r man y dymunwn mi ganwn a'r gog;
Yn awr dan ryw geubren 'rwy'n nuchu ac yn ochen,
Fel clomen un adeu anwydog."

"Time was when calm in wisdom's ways, with heart at rest,
I roamed the wood to hear the cuckoo sing;
But now I seek the shade alone, unblest,
And mourn—a shivering bird with broken wing."

"You must go to bed, Hugh," said Mari, when the moon began to look in through the little chamber window, where Gwladys lay quiet and thoughtful. "She has her mother with her, and I will come down in the early morning and make you a cup of tea; so get to bed—your eyes look weary, and your hand is shaking. A good night's rest will be best for you. I will take care of Gwladys, fâch."

"I know, I know," said Hugh; "you will be a better nurse than me, so good-night, lass. Can diolch!"

He made his way to the little back attic, where the tiny window looked out under the roof to the

rugged cliffs and brown hills stretching round the edge of the bay.

Madlen, who slept in the corresponding room in the loft, wondered what kept the Mishteer up so late; for long after she had gone to bed, she had heard him pacing up and down. Mari had left Gwladys under her mother's care, with a mould candle for company, just to show any of the villagers who might look that way that the interest of the situation had not entirely departed. It was considered an imperative duty at Mwntseison to keep a candle alight in any room where there was sickness or death.

So Nani Price lighted her candle and placed it near the window, where its modest glimmer was frequently remarked upon during the night by the sympathetic villagers.

"There's a light still in the Mishtress's window," said Nell, pressing her nose against her two-paned window—"a good light, too—a shop candle, no doubt. But the Mishteer can afford it—or perhaps," she added, as she returned to bed, "perhaps it is only a dip put close to the blind!"

Sara Pentraeth was equally impressed as she looked up the road at the glimmering light.

"Wel wyr!" she said, "they have lighted a second candle—and shop candles, depend on it! Dear, dear! there's nice it is to be rich!"

In the little room under the thatch, where Hugh Morgan had retired for the night, there was no candle or lamp, but it was flooded by a

stream of moonlight, which made a slanting path across the rough, uneven floor. Hugh crossed and re-crossed it as he walked with folded arms and bent head up and down—up and down until the moon was high in the sky. A rough wooden bedstead and bed occupied one dark end of the long, low room, which was otherwise destitute of furniture, excepting a worm-eaten bench which stood against the bare, white-washed wall. At the further end, in the dark shadow, stood two or three generations of spinning-wheels, in various stages of decay, accompanied by a few old cloaks and fishing-nets hanging over the rough rafters.

Here Hugh Morgan set himself to face his troubles and to fight with his angry feelings; and if, when the morning dawned, he had neither chased away the one nor conquered the other, he had at least gained courage to meet them with fortitude and patience. Suddenly he started, with his eyes fixed steadily on the further end of the room—for there, in the shadow, stood Mari Vone, her tall, graceful figure stooping forward a little, one white arm hanging by her side, the other raised and with finger pointing upwards, seemed to remind him that though he sought in vain for comfort on earth, from Heaven he might still gather help and strength! Her golden hair was unbound, and hung, as he remembered it of old, in flowing waves below her waist; and as he gazed earnestly into the darkness, her face, with every feature and lineament distinctly marked,

appeared before him—the deep blue eyes, the white eyelids that too often drooped over them, the parted lips, the dimpled chin—all were distinctly visible. He did not stop to ask himself how she had come there, but with the instinctive relief which her presence always brought him, he stretched out his hands with an exclamation of greeting, and, stepping across the bar of moonlight into the dark shadow, stood face to face with —nothing!—nothing but the old spinning-wheels and nets, and cloaks of different hues which hung down beside them. He stood baffled and astounded.

"Could these old rags have shaped themselves in his imagination into Mari's beautiful form?"

He returned to his seat on the bench, and tried once more to recall the picture to his mental vision—but in vain. She was gone! And Hugh turned again to face his loneliness and sorrow. Curiously enough, as the night advanced, his thoughts were withdrawn in a great measure from Gwladys, and were occupied with Mari Vone. A sore feeling of resentment against her took the place of the placid, contented friendship which for so many years had reigned in his heart.

"It was her fault," he thought—"all this bitter trouble that had come upon him! Everybody in the village knew that she had jilted him shamefully! And what did that mad woman mean?—'The girl who has loved you all her

life!' But whatever she meant, it was some fancy of her disordered brain!"

Mari Vone had injured him—had spoiled his life, and had laid him open to the temptation of a foolish headstrong passion—a passion that had already died out within him like the furze bush on yonder hillside that blazed up so merrily when the farmer's boys lighted it to-night at ten o'clock, and now see, scarcely a spark remained. So had his passion for Gwladys died out within the last few days, and Mari Vone had been the cause of all his mistakes and troubles! As for Gwladys, he bore her no resentment.

"Poor child, poor child!" he thought; "it has been no fault of hers! I alone am to blame! I was the Mishteer, and she dared not refuse me! But Ivor—how has he repaid me? But I will watch and see that at least he shall not lead Gwladys into mischief. Could they have met clandestinely? But no! the thought was unworthy of him or of her! But yet—he would watch! Yes—watch!" And for the first time in his life the giants of suspicion and jealousy clamoured loud at the door of his heart.

But he showed no outward sign of disturbance next morning when, rather late, he entered Gwladys' room. Mari Vone stood beside her, and, leaning over the still pale invalid, raised one finger to enforce silence; and the attitude instantly reminded Hugh of the figure he had seen by the old spinning wheels, and the feelings of

resentment which it had roused again took possession of him.

"Hush!" said Mari, "she is sleeping!"

"That is all right," he answered, in a cold and formal voice. "I will see to my wife now, Mari; and we need trouble you no longer."

Mari was conscious in every fibre of her being of the change in his manner. She flushed visibly, but showed no intention of giving up her post beside Gwladys.

"I have promised Gwladys not to leave her to-day; so have patience with me, Hugh, and leave me here. Your breakfast is waiting."

It was in his heart to thank her for all her tenderness and affection for his unhappy wife; but he hesitated, struggling with his new-born anger, and, saying something about his breakfast, left the room awkwardly; and Mari was once more left to keep watch by the sleeping girl-wife. Downstairs in the living-room she had carefully arranged Hugh's breakfast, and after partaking of it silently, he once more entered his wife's room. She was now awake, and when he appeared stretched both hands to meet him.

"Hugh bâch!" she said, "come and sit by me. Wilt go out for a bit, Mari lass? or stay if thee lik'st, for I have no secrets from thee."

But Mari, having first stooped down to kiss her, slipped out of the room, and Hugh took the chair which she had vacated.

Gwladys' breath came in short gasps, her nervousness was painful to witness, and Hugh

was smitten with a deep pity for the girl whose happiness he considered his mistaken passion had wrecked.

"I want to tell you——" she began, with dry lips and fluttering breath.

"Thou shalt tell me nothing, child! I know it all. Thou hast never loved me—thou hast never loved me since we were wedded! I have wronged thee, Gwladys; I might have known a young girl of thine age could not love a middle-aged man like me! But thou hast wronged me, too—thou shouldst have told me this that night when I went to thy mother to ask her for thee! But not a word from anyone! no one thought it worth while to stop me when they saw me rushing to destruction like a blind horse who gallops madly over the cliffs. 'Twas cruel! and I think I would have stretched out my hand to save the unhappy creature; but apparently Hugh Morgan has no friends—not even Mari Vone called me back! Well, Gwladys merch i, we have both made a mistake. Now our eyes are open, and we can only walk together to the end of our lives side by side, each one trying to lighten the sorrow of the other. God only knows how it is going to be, Gwladys fâch; but that is the path for us—it will be a dry and dusty one for us both. May it lead to the golden gates of the West at sunset!"

Gwladys, with her face hidden in the pillow, was sobbing bitterly. Hugh let her cry for a while, and then, drawing his hand tenderly over

the brown curls, asked, in a voice of much emotion:

"One question only I will ask, and that is, Didst mean to do it? Was it with clear purpose that dreadful race over the cliffs—that leap on to the sands below? Oh, Gwladys, didst think of it and settle it all while I was sleeping here beside thee? Wert so unhappy with me? Didst hate me so much, merch i, that the cold creeping tide and the wind and rain were a haven of refuge?"

"No, no, no!" said Gwladys, rising on her elbow, and looking at him with streaming eyes, "that I can tell thee, at all events. I did not plan it beforehand; I was restless and wicked, and I knew nothing till I was out in the blinding rain; I felt nothing but wanting to get away anywhere out of myself. It seemed as if an evil spirit had got hold of me. Gwen had been here in the early morning when I first came downstairs; she had taunted me and sneered at me, and the cruel look in those eyes of hers seemed to wake some mad creature inside me; and I felt nothing but on—on—until I had jumped down to the sands. Indeed, indeed, Hugh, that is the truth!"

"Thank God for that," said Hugh. "Cheer up, merch i, we shall pass through life somehow; and some day, I am sure, God will lighten thy burden."

"Thy tenderness is wounding me sore, Hugh. I have been a wicked girl, but try me once more.

Mari Vone has been with me since five o'clock, and she has been trying to show me how I can best find my way back to thine heart, and how I can repay thee for all thy goodness to me. Let me get up—I am longing to begin, and thou shalt see—oh! thou shalt see what a good and true wife I can be!"

"Right, merch i, thou art on the right path any way; and from henceforth try not to hate me, lass—try to love me, as if I were thy father or an elder brother. Canst give me so much, girl?"

"Oh, Hugh!" said Gwladys, springing on to the floor, and flinging her arms about his neck, "I have always loved you *so*—fondly, dearly!"

He gently loosened the hands which were clasped behind his neck, and still holding them in his own, stooped and kissed her forehead once —twice—three times—before he quietly left the room. He was on his way to the sail-shed when he was accosted by Sara Pentraeth, who came running madly down the hill to catch him, carrying her wooden shoes in her hand, closely followed by Nell.

"Oh, Mishteer! come back, come back! Come to poor Lallo—she is calling for you!"

"Come, Mishteer bâch!" said Nell.

"A dreadful thing has happened," said Sara. "Oh, Mishteer bâch! 'tis Gwen, the vilanes—she has done a fearful thing——"

But Hugh was already out of hearing. He had turned at once, and with rapid strides was

shortening the distance between him and Lallo's cottage.

As he approached it, he saw a crowd of villagers gathered round the pig-stye, gazing with exclamations of horror at something which lay inside the enclosure. Lallo, weeping bitterly, made one of the crowd. Gwen was nowhere to be seen, being in reality hidden behind the pig-stye, listening with a pleased smile to the various comments of her neighbours.

Lallo's sympathising friends plied her alternately with condolences and questions. A stream of blood ran from under the pig-stye door, and trickled down the rocky road—inside, lying prone on its side, was the pig, with a horrible gash in its throat from which the life-blood was still trickling.

"What is the meaning of this?" said Hugh, looking down at the slaughtered animal.

"'Tis Gwen!—Gwen did it, Mishteer, and then walked quietly into the house, and put the razor on the table! Didn't she, Lallo?"

"She did, she did!" said Lallo, beginning to cry afresh.

"Never mind, Lallo fâch!" said Sara; "you know you had settled to kill him next month."

"Oh, but that's a very different thing. To die at the appointed time, and to be properly salted and dried, every pig expects—but to be hurried unprepared like this is terrible."

"But you can salt him and dry him," said Nell, offering her mite of comfort.

"Can I, do you think?—oh! but I shall never have the heart to do it."

"Well, be thankful," said an old crone who had the reputation of being the wisest woman in the village, "be thankful it *is* the pig and not yourself who is lying there."

"Yes—you couldn't be salted and dried," said 'n'wncwl Jos.

"Well, that's true enough," answered Lallo, addressing Hugh Morgan. "Mishteer bâch, I am in terror of my life—what will you advise me to do? If she could kill that poor pig who never did her any harm, she may do the same to me. I have borne and borne, but I can bear no more. What shall I do, Mishteer bâch?"

"Well," said Hugh, "you must either have a strong man to live with you, who can keep a constant watch upon her, or you must send her to the asylum—that is my advice. Send her to the asylum."

"My Gwen to the 'sayloom!" cried Lallo, in angry tones. "No, no, we have not fallen so low as that! My aunt was not wise the last years of her life, but she died peacefully in her own bed, and my cousin was a mad 'iolin,'* but his mother kept him respectably shut up in the penucha for many years, and he died singing 'O, frynian Caersalem!' like a saint. No, no, my Gwen shall not go to the 'sayloom!"

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* Fool.

"What did you ask my advice for, woman, if you will not take it?"

"Well, Mishteer, I did not expect *that* advice; but I thought you would be able to tell me what I am to do." And she burst out into fresh sobs, mingled with indignant exclamations. "Ach y fi, no! 'Sayloom, indeed! Howyr bâch, no!"

"Well," said Hugh, turning to leave the crowd, "I have no more time to waste. Get Tim 'Twm' to cut up your pig properly and salt it, and get Gwen to help you—it will keep her from mischief—and by that time you will have calmed down, and will be ready for my advice, I expect. That woman is a danger to us all," he said to 'n'wncwl Jos, who stumped down the hill beside him, "and I must get her put in an asylum before another month is out."

"Must you, indeed!" said Gwen, suddenly facing them. She had glided from behind the pig-stye, where she had listened to the whole conversation, and followed close behind them down the road, and now, suddenly passing them, turned round facing them, and walking backwards, she fixed her glittering eyes upon Hugh. "Wilt take me to the 'sayloom, Hugh Morgan?—perhaps indeed! But we shall see—we shall see!" And laughing wildly, she turned suddenly up a path which led to the open cliffs.

"Tan y marw! 'tis Peggi Shân herself!" said 'n'wncwl Jos, who had not his usual cheerful jollity. In truth, the old man, in the excitement

caused by the events of the preceding day, and in the absence of Mari's thoughtful care, had entirely forgotten to change his dripping garments until late in the evening. He was accustomed to think nothing of such a wetting, and had a score of times braved its dangers; but to-day he shivered, and indignantly confessed to himself that he believed he had been such a fool as to catch a cold like a babby!

"Art afraid of her?" said Hugh, noticing his unusual quiet manner. "I must see about her, poor thing, for certain—as soon as I have shifted my business on to Josh Howels. I see no safety for her or for us except the asylum."

"Yes, clap her in," said the old man. "I don't like the look of her eyes."

Ivor Parry, though looking pale and shaken, had astonished everybody by appearing in the sail-shed as usual in the morning, and when Hugh entered was standing not far from the open doorway. An exchange of greetings was unavoidable between them.

"A brâf day," said Ivor, looking up from a sail which he was examining, "a brâf day, Mishteer, and the end of the storm, I think. I hope the Mishtress has not suffered from her wetting."

"Not much," said Hugh, fixing grave eyes upon his whilom friend.

Poor Ivor endeavoured to stand his scrutiny, but, it must be confessed, with no great success.

"Not much," continued Hugh, "and I have to thank you for risking your life to save hers.

Dear God! had I known it was my wife you were going to save, you would not so easily have overcome me and pushed me out of your boat."

"B'dsiwr, b'dsiwr! I did not know myself it was the Mishtress. I thought it was Gwen, or I would not have thrust you back. You must forgive me that, Hugh."

He was keenly conscious that, in addressing him, Hugh had dropped the familiar "thee" and "thou," and he fell at once into the more formal manner himself.

"We would both have done the same for any woman."

"I am glad to see you have not suffered, and I thank you again," said Hugh, with a slight show of warmth. He could not look into those honest blue eyes and not trust them, but he could not remember all he had learnt of late, and quite believe.

The death of Lallo's pig was the subject of conversation in the sail-shed that morning, and Hugh was thankful that its racy horrors had the effect of turning the gossip of the villagers from his wife's narrow escape.

"Oh, she is quite well, and none the worse for her dip," he answered jovially to every one who made inquiries.

"There's glad I am, indeed, indeed—she might be drowned. But, Mishteer, what shall we do about Gwen, weaving in and out amongst us? Ach y fi! there's dangerous."

"Yes, I am afraid she must go to the asylum

as soon as I have settled my affairs a little," said Hugh, not sorry to add to the gruesomeness of the incident, and to turn their thoughts away from his wife.

"But how did the Mishtress get to Traeth-y-daran?" said the wise woman of the village—"that's what I want to know."

"Oh, she's but young, you know," said Hugh, smiling indulgently, "and thoughtless like all young things, and fancied she would like to see the storm from Traeth-y-daran. She might have fared badly if Ivor Parry had not risked his life so nobly. I have given her a good scolding." And he laughed cheerfully.

"Did Ivor know it was the Mishtress?" said the inquisitive wise woman.

"No, no, we both thought it was Gwen."

And so the incident was allowed to sink to rest, to make room for the more exciting adventures of Lallo's pig.

CHAPTER XIII.

DOUBTS AND FEARS.

For some time after these events, a season of outward calm seemed to reign over the Mishteer's household. Gwladys had taken her place in the daily routine of life with courage and patience, and, leaning upon Mari Vone's strength of character, kept up the rôle of happy wife! She executed all her small duties with unswerving exactitude, going out of her way to carry out the most trivial details; every wifely duty was performed with apparently cheerful alacrity, and her demeanour was perfect in its simulation of domestic happiness. She *almost* deceived herself, but there were moments when the gnawing giant of unrest within her threatened to overwhelm her new-born strength and earnestness of purpose. She fought hard, and gained comparative peace. At evening, when Mari left her, the long tremulous pressure of her embrace alone expressed her gratitude; but her friend knew well the sunken rocks that underlay the seemingly smooth current of life under Hugh Morgan's roof.

Truth to tell, the even flow of her own life

had been much disturbed of late, and though she still attended to all her domestic duties with the same stately calmness, it was not without a feeling of sore trouble that she observed the change in Hugh's manner. Not only to her, but to all around him, he appeared colder and more formal, much absorbed in his own thoughts.

"Business, merch i!" he would explain sometimes, when, with a serious wistfulness, Gwladys timidly rallied him.

Mari had again fallen into her old habit of leaving the house before Hugh returned from the sail-shed in the evening, and as she always went home before noon to prepare her uncle's cawl, many days went by without her seeing Hugh.

"Thou must stand alone now, Gwladys fâch," she said one day, when her friend demurred to her leaving her so early; "our house wants a thorough clean-up. I must white-wash the stone at the garden gate, and put some fresh red paint at the back of the big chimney, the smoke has blackened it so."

"Yes, I suppose I must," said Gwladys, "and I shall have Hugh home soon to cheer me up—I will be bright and nice, as thou art! I have learnt a great deal in the last few weeks, and it has been all through thee, Mari fâch! only, Mari," throwing away the stockings which she was knitting, and clasping her knees, and looking up into her face, if with less misery in her eyes, still with a look of troubled thought, "only, I wish I was not walking along my path so blindfolded. I

dare not look to the right or left, but I keep straight on, as thou hast advised me—to try and make Hugh happy! try and make Hugh happy! Nothing else in my life, Mari; the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning, it is my determination and my wish and my prayer—and he is worthy of it all! I am beginning to feel it, Mari—but will I ever be worthy of *him?*"

"Yes, yes," said her friend, "a brighter day will dawn for us all; we must remind each other of that when the clouds are hanging low."

"Yes," answered Gwladys. "I am now going to prepare the tea. Thinking is my enemy, which I must keep out of my life until I am an old woman. Perhaps, then, when I am sitting here with my spectacles, and knitting, I shall be able to think again."

"Fforwel, then," said Mari; "perhaps I will not come to-morrow till afternoon." And she drew her shawl tightly around her and ran all the way home, helped by the winter wind, which blew icily from the sea.

Gwladys busied herself with her preparations for her husband's evening meal, clattering the tea-things, humming at her work, and making believe to be a busy housewife absorbed in her small duties; and her attempts at cheerfulness were not without some measure of success. But it was a fictitious and unreal calm, and one which she was conscious might at any moment crumble into ruins. But for the present her newly-formed resolutions kept her up; and as she tossed the

frizzling lightcakes on the griddle, she tried to hum an old familiar tune, which had of late been a stranger to her lips.

It was at this moment that Hugh came in from the gusty twilight; he heard the crooning song, and the sadness deepened in his face, and a light shot into his eyes from some hidden spark of jealous suspicion.

"She's happy," he thought; "she has seen Ivor!" for during the afternoon the latter had been absent from his work for an hour or so, and Hugh had noted it and had wondered.

He closed the door when he entered, fighting rather testily with the blustering sea-wind, which was accustomed to find easy access into every part of the house. Doors were always left open at Mwntseison, except in the stormiest weather or when a death had occurred, so Gwladys looked up with astonishment.

"Gwen is coming down the road, and I thought thou wouldst be better without her."

"Oh, yes—bolt it, bolt it!" she said, her colour coming and going. "I am afraid of her."

"Well, I think we shall all be afraid of her soon," he said; and while his wife placed a chair for him under the chimney, and drew the round table near the fire, and piled his plate with the crisp lightcakes, he explained to her his arrangements for sending Gwen to the asylum.

"Poor thing, poor thing! but it will be best indeed. I will be glad when thou art with me always, Hugh. 'Tis nervous work to be alone

all day, while she haunts the village like a grey ghost."

"Hast had no company to-day, then?" said Hugh, with a searching glance. "Hast not been out?"

"Yes, as far as mother's; but I did not meet Gwen."

Hugh was silent, and Gwladys' spirits flagged a little. She was conscious of some brooding thought in his mind, and with her continued feeling of guilt and self-upbraiding, she became nervously silent too.

The next day, in the sail-shed, Hugh was gloomy and pre-occupied, and Ivor Parry observed it with sorrow. He, too, was full of troubled thoughts. To lose Gwladys was a bitter trial; but what a solace it would have been could he have kept Hugh's friendship—this man whom he had loved and almost worshipped. But now he realised the truth that, in the nature of things, such a solace was impossible. They must walk along the road of life apart, and it were well that the severance should be soon and complete. Even to-morrow he hoped to leave the sail-shed, with all its lingering associations of happiness and sorrow; and, when five o'clock came, he remained alone, making some final arrangements which would facilitate the winding up of the Mishteer's affairs. He had not noticed that Hugh had not left with his workmen as usual. In truth, the latter was now sitting before his desk in the little office, whose badly-fitting door

let in between its gaping boards a full view of the shed.

The evening shades were fast darkening the old room, and Ivor Parry had lighted a lamp, whose glimmering beams showed up the rafters, the coils of rope, and the other impedimenta scattered about the floor. Hugh, sitting at his desk in the darkness, could see the whole scene through the chinks in the half-open door, and he gazed silently at Ivor's manly form now stooping to re-arrange something on the floor, now stretching to reach something from the rafters; and his heart ached with a dull longing for the time that was past, for the friendship which had filled his life more than he knew at the time, and, if the truth must be told, for the old days before his passion for Gwladys had enslaved him. Those days could never return. He had bowed his neck to the yoke, and henceforth she must be his first care and thought; and how easy and how sweet this would have been, if only—and he brooded there in the darkness with mournful eyes and a heavy heart.

Suddenly there was a step at the door of the sail-shed, a finger raised the latch, the door was pushed open, and Gwladys entered. Hugh trembled in every nerve, and watched eagerly what would happen.

For a moment, her only thought seemed to be to shut out the boisterous sea-wind, which was swirling outside the door; then she threw back the hood of her cloak, and looked in as-

tonishment, while Ivor Parry, no less taken by surprise, lifted himself up from a bale of sail upon which he had been kneeling. Gwladys involuntarily clutched her hand to her side, while Ivor stood straight before her, with both arms hanging down beside him. Hugh's black eyes never swerved in their keen glance; it never struck him that he was acting dishonourably; his suspicious anxiety seemed to have smothered every other feeling, as he sat there peering at the unconscious actors in the scene before him. A crimson flush spread over Gwladys' face and neck and forehead; but Ivor was pale as death. Neither spoke for some time. Her breath came and went in little fluttering gasps. Ivor was the first to regain his self-possession, and Hugh strained every nerve to listen.

"Well, Mishtress, how art thou?"

"I only came," said Gwladys, ignoring his question, "to fetch Hugh's coat, and to look for him. He has not come home."

"They have all left," said Ivor, glancing into the darkness of the little office. "I have only stayed on a bit to make things more plain for the Mishteer—I am going to-morrow."

"Yes," was all her answer, while her head drooped, and she nervously and unconsciously slipped her ring up and down her finger. She seemed suddenly anxious to get away, and, turning hurriedly to the peg on which a coat of Hugh's was hanging, said, "I want it to darn."

The peg was just above her reach, so she

sprang a little from the ground, and succeeded in dislodging the coat from its hook, but in doing so caught the wrist-band of her jacket in its place, and hung, with toes just reaching the ground, in a helpless and uncomfortable position, trying with her left hand to loosen the wrist-band from the hook—an object which the weight of her body frustrated. Ivor's first impulse was to rush to her assistance, and every pulse in his body throbbed with the desire once more to hold her in his grasp; but his arms again dropped down, and he turned resolutely to a coil of ropes, and, dragging it within reach of her feet, said:

"Stand on this, Mishtress."

His white set face and his trembling voice were the only signs of the storm that raged within him; but they sufficed to make plain to Gwladys, as well as to the silent watcher behind the half-closed doors of the office, the strong curb which he was placing upon his feelings.

Gwladys stepped off the coil of ropes, stood a moment, trembling and blinded with her tears.

"That nasty hook has shaken thee," said Ivor; and she made no answer, but, stooping to pick up the coat, gulped down a sob which Ivor and Hugh distinctly heard.

"Fforwel, then!" she said, turning back for a moment as she reached the door. "I wish thee well at the mill, Ivor Parry." And she passed out into the night wind.

"Fforwel, Mishtress!" caught her ear as she went.

For a few minutes, Ivor stood with folded arms, looking after her into the darkness, and then sitting down on the bale upon which he had been at work, a great sob shook his frame, too, and it was with a veritable groan of distress that he once more rose and applied himself energetically to his work.

In the darkened office Hugh still sat on; but his head was bowed upon his hands. A feeling of humility, never quite a stranger to his noble heart, tinged the bitter thoughts which occupied the silent half-hour which passed before Ivor Parry extinguished his lamp and left the sail-shed, locking the door behind him. Then Hugh rose, and letting himself out through a small door from his office, walked homeward through the blustering gale which swept up the village road.

Gwladys looked up from her knitting as he entered the house with relief, and, rising to meet her husband, placed a trembling hand on his arm.

"Hugh, where have you been? you are so late! I would be frightened, indeed, only I know you have much to do to settle things before you give up."

"Yes, business, merch i; I am not often late for meals—too good an appetite for that, Gwladys; and you cook them too nicely for that! What have you for supper? Something good, I can tell by the smell." And he rattled on to hide the embarrassment which he saw in Gwladys' face.

"Yes, fried herrings and onions; you like them, don't you?" she said, with a wistful anxiety to please, very touching to Hugh in his present mood of self-reproach; "and a white loaf Madlen has made for thee."

"Supper then, and business to the winds!" said Hugh cheerfully. "Come and sit down, merch i, or the board will not be full."

"I went to look for thee," said Gwladys, sitting down opposite him at the small table, "but there was no one in the sail-shed except Ivor Parry."

"Perhaps indeed!" answered Hugh, with simulated indifference; "I suppose he had some last arrangements to make; he is going to-morrow."

"Yes, he told me." And with the relief of having been perfectly open, Gwladys ate her supper, and talked with more ease and cheerfulness than she had shown at first.

Hugh hastened to change the subject, and with tender thoughtfulness took more than his share of the conversation all the evening. If there was one good trait stronger than another in his character, it was justice. Before all things, Hugh Morgan had been a "just" man; and there was growing in his heart, where at first anger and suspicion had held their own, a strong feeling of admiration for these two—his friend and his wife—who had met under his own eyes, where nothing but their honourable natures restrained them, where they thought no eye was

upon them to mark a loving look, no ear to hear a tender farewell, no tongue of scandal to blame them, and yet had come forth immaculate, spotless, blameless, from the trial. He doubted whether he himself would have passed scathless through the temptation, and the nobility of his soul responded to the perfect freedom from guile, which he had seen in the interview between Ivor and Gwladys. It was not to be wondered at, therefore, if, in the days following, his voice, his manner, his actions towards his young wife bore the stamp of a more than usually gentle and chivalrous homage. It fell on Gwladys' perturbed spirit like a tonic, bracing her for still more strenuous efforts to keep in the difficult path on which she had entered. And so outward calm and peace brooded over the Mishteer's cottage, for within it were two beings, who, though the glamour and beauty of life were denied them, yet walked courageously on with open brow and steadfast feet, looking neither to the right nor to the left, but simply to the endeavour to do their part nobly in the battle of life.

To Mwntseison also had returned a season of calm. Its inhabitants had latterly been considerably uplifted, not to say inflated, by the evident personal notice accorded to them by Providence! Gwen's bidding, with the unheard-of generosity of the donors, had been like a pleasant fillip to the lethargic tendency of the rural mind, had stimulated and whetted their appetites for more sensations, so that the Mishtress's nar-

row escape had been received with much appreciation.

"Yes, yes," said 'n'wncwl Jos; "there's many things in Mwntseison which you won't find in any other village along the bay. Look at Aberython and Clidwen; and there's Treswnd and Abermere! Is there a man like the Mishteer in one of those places?"

"No! Nor a woman like Mari Vone neither!" said a burly sailor.

"No, no!" said 'n'wncwl Jos again; "there's no doubt the Almighty keeps His eye on us, 'cos look at Lallo's pig now!"

"Well, it seems to me," said Shoni, the blacksmith, who was always inclined to be irreverent, "that He wasn't watching very closely when Gwen did that nasty trick!"

"Wasn't He, then!" said 'n'wncwl Jos, stumping violently with his wooden leg. "What was to prevent her killing her mother instead of the pig? If poor Gwen felt she must kill something, what could be better than the pig?"

"What, indeed?" said everybody; "for though he was hurried away rather (not so long, too! for he was to be killed in a month), he is as well salted and dried as any pig ever was, and lying safe in sides and hams on the shelves in Rhys Thomas's shop."

"Ach y fi! I won't touch that bacon whatever," said Nell.

"And look at Ivor Parry, brought safe from the sea and the fever. Oh, yes, caton pawb! it's

as plain as the day. Mwntseison is well looked after!"

And there were many of the young and frivolous who wished for a few more sensations, since it was evident that they brought them no harm.

"When is Gwen going to the 'sayloom?" said Shoni-go.* "She was screaming and laughing like a mad thing, as she is, last night, and flying like a partridge over the cliffs, her arms spread out, and her toes just touching the ground. Diwedd anwl! my heart nearly leapt out of my body when I heard her!"

"Yes," said 'n'wncwl Jos, "the Mishteer will see to it soon."

But a greater excitement than Gwen's madness was hanging over the village, for in a day or two the astounding news was spread abroad that 'n'wncwl Jos was ill. 'N'wncwl Jos! who had never been known to suffer an ache or a pain, except, indeed, the rheumatic twinges which he declared he still felt in the leg which was buried in Glasgow! 'N'wncwl Jos, who, though not wanting in sympathy, still tinged his expressions thereof with a slight tone of blame, as though sickness was invariably "somebody's" fault. And the strongest man in Mwntseison felt his tenure of life uncertain.

"Caton pawb! what's the matter with him?"

"Flammashwn! Never been well since he jumped into the sea after the Mishteer, when he

* Blacksmith.

kept his wet clothes on all day, though he won't confess it," said Dye Pentraeth; and the whole village was in a state of ferment, and Mari Vone was besieged by condoling friends.

The invalid at first fought valiantly with his sickness, declaring he would be all right in a day or two. The doctor shook his head, and hour by hour 'n'wncwl Jos grew worse, but still continued to crack his jokes when a moment's cessation from pain enabled him to do so.

"Oh, go 'long with you, Nell Jones," he said, when that worthy woman came in with what she considered an appropriate expression of countenance. "Go 'long with you, Nell, and don't pull a long face here; I've bin a deal worse than this! Why! at Glasgow, when I lost my leg, I came to myself when they were carrying me from the docks to the hospital. I didn't know where I was in that straight, narrow thing—'a stretcher' they call it in English—and raised my head to see, and there I was being carried by four men, and a long tail of boys, and men, and women running after me. 'Jâr-i,' sez I to myself, 'I never thought I should see my own funeral!' Well, in three weeks, I was out of the hospital, and—and—let me see—where's my wooden leg? I want to go down to the shore; there's a boat coming in——" and he rambled away in delirium, and in spite of his plucky spirit, his sickness conquered him, and for many days he lay at the point of death.

Then came the time when the warmth and

tenderness of the Welsh hearts were shown—not a man, woman, or child who did not feel a personal sorrow. They took it in turns to watch through the long nights at the sick man's bed, with eager interest anticipating every want, and endeavouring to make Mari Vone's burden lighter. From every farm in the neighbourhood came presents of milk and eggs. The sailors brought high-shouldered bottles of Hollands and Schnapps; the fishermen dared the storms to procure fish; and even the children brought eggs or apples for Mari. Gwladys was a frequent visitor; and Hugh often sat beside the sick man, whose illness he felt was due to his faithful, though rash, devotion to himself. His presence seemed to have a soothing effect upon 'n'wncwl Jos; the excited, delirious talk would quiet down to a low rambling, even to a pleasant recalling of youthful days of merriment, and Mari Vone learned once more to welcome the sound of Hugh's footsteps as he approached the cottage door.

One afternoon, while Hugh sat beside him, the old man fell into a calm, refreshing sleep, a sleep that had been anxiously watched for by Dr. Hughes, but which seemed dangerously long delayed. Hugh knew the importance of this sleep, and, nodding to Mari, said quietly, "Go and rest thyself, I will watch till he wakes;" and she had gone thankfully, and resting on her own bed, the tension of the long anxiety was relaxed, and the drooping eyelids were fast closed

in as heavy and refreshing a sleep as 'n'wncwl Jos's.

Through the broad, gaping hinges of the tar-painted bedroom door, standing half open, Hugh, as he sat there motionless, holding the sick man's hand, could see into the cosy penisha, and out through the open doorway into the road. It was one of those calm, sunny days which sometimes visit us in November. The sound of the sea filled the air, the click of Shoni-go's anvil, and the voices of the children at play on the beach, came on the breeze. Hugh sat on quietly dreaming, letting his thoughts roam uncurbed over the events of his past life. He remembered how, in the days gone by, he had crossed the threshold of this cottage with the ecstatic buoyancy of a lover, not unmixed with the reverence of a worshipper who enters the shrine which contains his idol. Certainly he had loved Mari Vone with a depth and intensity which he thought neither time nor eternity had power to annihilate. "Neither has it," he thought, "it is only altered. I am a married man now, and Gwladys has my love, my respect, my tender pity; but there is a bond which links me to Mari Vone, so pure, so strong, so enduring, that I fear not to lay it before God, and to ask His blessing upon it."

At this moment a shadow darkened the outer doorway, and a light footstep (everyone walked gingerly there now) came into the kitchen. Hugh raised his eyes, and a pleased, indulgent look came over his face as he saw through the crack

that it was Gwladys. "The little one, bless her!" he thought, but he made no movement; and Gwladys, noticing the restful quiet in the house, the cessation of the rambling voice in the sick-room, guessed at once that the hoped-for sleep had come, and prepared to leave on tip-toe. She stood a moment at the table, laying down a bowl of curds and milk which she had brought for Mari, and at that instant another figure darkened the doorway, and raising her finger to her lips to enforce silence, she saw Ivor Parry enter silently. Hugh saw it all, too, and found it difficult to keep his hand quietly on 'n'wncwl Jos's. For a moment, as before, the two who confronted each other in the kitchen stood embarrassed and silent; but Gwladys first regained her composure, and in a whisper, which Hugh's quick ear caught distinctly, said:

"'N'wncwl Jos is asleep, I think."

"I am glad," said Ivor; "that is good news. I could not let another day pass without coming to ask for him. I am going back at once."

"You had better stay," said Gwladys, "till Mari comes out. I am going."

Ivor nodded silently, and Gwladys passed out into the sunshine. Left alone, he drew his hand over his face as if awaking from a dream, and Hugh watched him gravely. Suddenly a light gleamed in his eyes, a flush overspread his face, and looking round like a thief who espies a treasure, he stretched out his hand to the table, and clutched a bunch of sea-pinks which had fallen

from the folds of Gwladys' neckerchief. Hugh had noticed them there when she entered. For a moment Ivor looked at them, then pressed them to his lips before thrusting them inside the breast of his coat. He stood a few moments in silent thought, and then left the house.

In the inner room, Hugh still watched with troubled eyes; but the hand which held the sick man's remained firm and unmoved, and 'n'wncwl Jos slept on.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MILL.

ROUND the old mill at Traeth Berwen the night wind sighed and moaned, as it always did here at the opening of the narrow valley. Even in the hot summer days, when the cattle sought the shade, and the flowers drooped languidly, there was always a breeze blowing up or down the cwm, and to-night it blew in gusts round every gable of the old building, shaking the rickety shutters, and brushing the overhanging ivy against the window panes. Inside, however, there was no sign of anything but comfort and cheerfulness. On the stone hearth in the large kitchen a bright fire glowed, on which a huge log had just been thrown, a crowd of crackling sparks and blue smoke flew up the wide open chimney, and the ruddy glow brought into relief the numerous pegs and stakes driven into its brown smoked walls, for the suspension of future flitches and hams when Ivor Parry should have become more settled into his domestic menage. At present it was empty, and as Ivor and his friend Robert the miller sat well under its shade,

they could look straight up its wattled walls to the night sky above, where a bright star shone down upon them. On a small table beside them stood a quaint brown jug of ale, accompanied by two "blues"; they smoked in silence, while Acsa clattered her pails and wooden shoes in the background. She had lived there all her life, at least from childhood, as maid-of-all-work to Robert and his family, and had been taken over by Ivor Parry as part of the furniture. Indeed, to have separated Acsa from the mill would have been a difficult task. Robert had attempted it once, when some of her wilful ways had tried the good-wife beyond endurance; but she had howled and cried like a beaten dog, and had stayed starving and cold about the precincts of the mill so pertinaciously, that she was at last allowed to re-enter, to the delight of the children, and to the secret satisfaction of the miller and his wife, who had missed her faithful service. No one had ever tried to eject her again, so here she was to-night, perfectly satisfied to click clack about in her wooden shoes, in and out of the brown shadows, scraping the potatoes, cleaning the shoes, scouring the brass pans and the pails, without a thought of any reward, except the small pittance of wages which she always received with humble gratitude and a bob curtesy on the 11th of November, this being the day appointed all through Cardiganshire for the ending and beginning of a year of domestic service.

Robert had come down for a smoke and a

chat with his successor at the mill, and they had apparently exhausted every topic of interest, for they puffed long in silence. Suddenly a weird wailing sound came down the chimney, and both men looked up at the shining star above them, while Acsa exclaimed, "Ach y fi!"

"What is it?" said Ivor, listening with his pipe in his hand; and again on the night wind came the long-drawn mournful tones of a woman's voice, who sang some old-world melody with a wild refrain.

"Mark my word, 'tis that Gwen Owen again!" said Robert, "that mad woman from Mwntseison; she has taken to coming here lately, and sits on the edge of the cliffs, always at night, and always singing the same tune. I am beginning to know it quite well; indeed, I think I must have heard my mother sing it, and I believe she called it a Witch Song."

"I seem to know it, too," said Ivor. "Let us go out and listen."

"Howyr bâch," said Acsa, "there's foolish you are to tempt the Almighty like that! when He has given you a warm kitchen to sit in, you go wilfully out to listen to a witch tune! Take care she doesn't draw you away with it; she is Peggi Shân's grand-daughter, and you know, Robert the Mill, that your own uncle Simon was drawn by her singing out there on her father's smack, till he was lost in the fog and drowned! Ach y fi! don't venture."

"Twt, twt," said Robert, "she's far enough

from us here." And he slipped back the wooden bolt and opened the door.

"Shut it after you, then!" screamed Acsa, "for I won't let the tune in here; but, oh! there it is in the chimney again!" And she set herself to her scrubbing to deaden the weird sounds.

Outside Robert and Ivor listened, while full and clear on the night-wind came Gwen's voice, sometimes in a low, soft, wailing tone, almost lost on the breeze; sometimes rising as if in tones of entreaty; at other times in passionate words that almost ended in a shriek.

"Caton pawb!" said Ivor, "she is madder than I thought she was!" And, as a large white owl flitted silently by them, the two men started nervously.

"It's enough to make one's blood run cold. There! do you hear the crows? She has startled them from their nests on the cliffs."

"Poor Gwen!" said Ivor. "I never thought she would come to this. Let us go near her and hear what she says."

And up the side of the bank they went on the soft turf, until, on reaching the top, they saw Gwen standing on the very edge of the cliff, with arms outspread, and gesticulating wildly, singing, and sometimes talking.

"Oh, winds and waves and flames,
I call you by your names,
North, South, East, West,
Hither come, do my behest,
And hasten now to help me!"

They were close to her, but hidden by one of the many boulders scattered about the greensward.

"How she repeats that verse," said Ivor. "I am afraid of her, Robert—not for myself, but for some of them at Mwntseison. She means to do some mischief with her waves and her winds and her flames. Listen! she is talking."

"Oh, yes, night-wind, I hear you, I know what you are saying—'Be ready, Gwen—be ready, Gwen! and we will help you.' Hush!" and, with her finger raised, she bent over the cliff until the strong men shuddered with fear. "Hush! 'tis the sea; I hear you whispering 'Be ready, Gwen—be ready, Gwen!' but you are worthless! bant a chi *—bant a chi! I have a better friend than you, though he is not here to-night," and turning round she caught sight of a shower of sparks which rose from the mill chimney. "Yes, he is—yes, he is!" she screamed, clapping her hands and dancing with delight; "there are his signs!" and she burst into the wild refrain of her weird song once more:—

"Come flames of yellow, red, and blue,
Help! for you are my servants true."

"Good-night," she said, waving her hands towards the old mill, "I understand your message; I will be there, and you will be there." And, turning, she fled back towards Mwntseison, as Shoni-go had said, "like a partridge," with arms

* "Away with you!"

spread out, her grey shawl held like wings, and her toes scarce touching the ground.

Ivor and Robert came slowly out of the shadow of the rock.

"Jâr-i!" said the latter, "I thought the witches were dead; but, God save us, we have heard one sing to-night."

"Poor Gwen," said Ivor, remembering many a kindness which she had shown him before she had married Siencyn Owen, "she's no witch, only a poor misguided woman, whose life has turned sour, like milk in a thunderstorm. Remember she was brought up by that uncanny old sinner Peggi Shân, and now it pleases her to think she has the same 'hysbys' nature."

"Perhaps she has," said Robert, "for such things are."

"Perhaps indeed," said Ivor. "Anyway, she can do mischief, and I must keep an eye on Mistress Gwen."

And they returned to the mill, where Acsa let them in with a sense of relief.

"Another glass of beer before you start?" said Ivor.

"Well, yes, indeed, and another whiff; that tune has given me a shiver. Ach y fi!" said Robert, taking up his long clay pipe once more. "I am glad to see thee so comfortable, Ivor. 'Tis a wife thou wilt want most here now. Come up to Blaensethin, lad, and see my three pretty daughters; perhaps one will suit thy fancy."

"Perhaps indeed," said Ivor. "I have heard

they are so pretty 'tis wiser to keep away; but I am safe, for a wife is a piece of furniture that the old mill will have to do without as long as I live. I am born to be an old bachelor."

"Twt, twt," said Robert, rising, "come up to see us on Monday, and we will go to Elinor Pugh's bidding together, and let's see if we can't knock the old bachelor out of thee."

"Well, I won't promise; but we shall see," said Ivor. "Nos da!"

"Nos da!" shouted Robert, taking the opposite direction to that along which Gwen had flown homewards.

Ivor pondered long, lying awake in his bed and listening to the sighing of the wind and the swish, swish of the waves on the beach below the mill. No other sound broke the silence of the night except the "to-whit, to-hoo" of the white owl who sat in the ivied tower of the old church higher up the valley.

All next day he was too busy for much thought, for, with the early dawn, the carts came down the hills from one of the farms on the uplands. He heard the merry crack of the whip and the lively whistle of the carters, while he donned his mealy garments, and, looking through his ivy-curtained window, he saw the brilliant scarlet and blue carts come lumbering down the hill, making a bright bit of colouring in the leaden winter landscape.

He hurried down to open the big door, and to pull up the dam-board from the leet, turning the

water full on the cumbrous wooden wheel, for he would not have it said that "the new miller was caught napping," and before eight o'clock the mill was filled with the sound of the grinding and crushing of the big millstones, the clap, clap of the wheel, and the musical rushing of the Berwen as it poured and trickled through the rude machinery.

The empty carts returned up the hill, to come again in the evening, when the new corn and oats had been ground into the sweet brown flour and delicious oatmeal, in readiness for the barley loaves and oat-cakes of the farm.

One of the men servants and two jolly lasses stayed in the mill, and shouted their jokes and chaff at each other through the noise.

Ivor, on his mettle, worked with a will, grinding the corn, and endeavouring to show that the old Melin Berwen had still a thorough and a jolly miller at the head of affairs. He joined in the merry laughter and talk, which helped on the work of the day; but through it all the memory of Gwen's wild song haunted him, and, mingled with the whirring and rushing of the mill, he seemed to hear the tones of the refrain:

> "Come, flames of yellow, red, and blue,
> Help; for you are my servants true!"

When at last the meal had been tied into the sacks and the brilliant blue and red cortége returned up the hill with whistling and shouting and laughter, Ivor climbed up the ricketty stairs,

and changed his mealy clothes for his usual half-sailor garb. As soon as his tea was over he turned his face in the grey of the evening towards Mwntseison. It was almost dark when he reached the village, and he was puzzled where to begin his search for Gwen. "In her own home? No! that would set her on her guard! Where he most dreaded to find her—in Gwladys' home? No! there he must not enter!"

Mari Vone's white-walled cottage was the first to appear through the twilight.

"Of course!" he said, "I want to know how 'n'wncwl Jos is."

He listened at the open door for a minute to the sound of voices within. No! Gwladys' clear tones were not there; but 'n'wncwl Jos's "Hegh! hegh! hegh!" was distinctly to be heard.

"Hello!" he said, in a cheery voice as he entered, "no need to ask how the sick man is!"

Mari placed a chair for him by her uncle's side, who was bubbling over with tales and laughter, his wooden leg once more in its proper place, and the usual quid of tobacco in his cheek.

"Hooray, mach-geni! there's glad I am to see thee! Wel wyr! they have been nearly killing me here with their pills and their draughts and things; but old 'n'wncwl Jos has diddled them all this time!" And with a poke in Ivor's ribs, he laughed and stumped with something like his old jollity.

"Don't listen to him, Ivor bâch!" said Mari;

"thee know'st him of old. There never was a man more ready to take his physic, so anxious he was to get well; not a pill nor a draught would he miss, and all day he watched that clock to keep me up to time with his doses!"

"Listen not to her, lad," said 'n'wncwl Jos, rather shamefaced; "she's a woman, and they always know how 'to change the feather to the colour of the river.' And how dost get on at Melyn Berwen?"

"Oh, very well so far!"

"Don't thee take too much toll now," said the old man, with another nudge. "Mari's got two winchesters of barley for thee to grind next week."

"Da iawn!* and how does Mwntseison get on without me? How is Gwen?"

"Oh, indeed, better, I think," said Mari, throwing a fresh log on the fire; "she does not wander about the village so much—goes over the cliffs and speaks to no one. Hugh Morgan thinks it is a pity to put her into an asylum just yet, while she is so quiet."

"Clap her in! clap her in!" said 'n'wncwl Jos; "she'll be safe there, that's my advice."

"Well, indeed, it seems cruel to say so; but I think so, too," Ivor answered; and he proceeded to tell them of her eccentric behaviour on the cliffs the previous night, and the uncanny nature of her song.

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* Very good.

Mari Vone laughed heartily; looking up from her knitting, she said:

"Why, Ivor bâch, hast forgotten thy childhood completely? Dost not remember that old game? Why, we played it in a ring on the sands in the summer evenings, singing those words all the time. Every child in Mwntseison knows it!"

"Well, b'tshwr!" said Ivor; "what a ffwlcyn * I was! Well, indeed, I thought it seemed familiar to me somehow; and Robert Owen, too, said he thought he had heard it somewhere."

'N'wncwl Jos was extremely amused.

"Well, there's two fools you were! 'There's a pair of you,' as the devil said to his wooden shoes."

Ivor joined in the laugh, and felt relieved by the discovery of his mistake, more particularly when Gwen herself entered the house suddenly and silently. She stood a moment, with her white face and piercing eyes half hidden under the shade of her grey shawl. A silence fell upon them as they encountered her cold stare, and Ivor was the first to speak.

"Well, Gwen fâch!" he said kindly; "and how art thou and Lallo?"

"I am quite well, Ivor Parry, and my mother is quite well. How art getting on at the mill?" And without waiting for an answer, she went quietly away.

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* Fool; a dolt.

"We can't call that woman mad enough for an asylum, poor thing!" said Mari.

"I say, clap her in!" said 'n'wncwl Jos; "she'll be safe there. Clap her in!"

"Well, she seemed quiet enough to-night, and sensible. Perhaps I have been too easily frightened," said Ivor. "Wilt promise me, Mari, to send over to the mill if she shows any signs of mischief?"

"I promise."

"Then good-night," said Ivor; "I *was* a fool not to know the old game song."

As he passed Gwen's cottage, Lallo stood at the door.

"Well, I am glad," she said, "that thou hast not quite left us, Ivor Parry. Come in, come in, and have a chat, for I am all alone."

"Where is Gwen, then—and how is she?"

"Oh, she's better—very quiet indeed, and gone to bed."

"Da iawn!" said Ivor, "that is good news." And making the lateness of the hour an excuse for not entering, he returned over the cliffs to Traeth Berwen.

Acsa was still up when he entered the mill kitchen, stooping over the fire and crooning an old Welsh hymn. With an oar-shaped porridge spoon, she stirred the "bwdran" which babbled in the iron pot hanging from a chain in the chimney. In her quaint Welsh costume, a red cotton handkerchief tied under her chin, her hard-featured face catching the light of the glowing fire,

she looked like a witch who stirs the broth in her cauldron.

"Caton pawb, woman," said Ivor, as he entered and bolted the door, "why art not in bed? I wish I had one of those new machines for taking pictures—I believe I would make my fortune by selling a few of thee, sitting there over thy bwdran in the peat smoke."

Acsa laughed, and disclosed a toothless upper gum.

"Do then, indeed," she said—"'twould be the first time old Acsa had been of use to anyone."

"Oh, halt there," said Ivor, sitting down to his supper. "I don't know how I should get on here without thee. Give me a bowl of bwdran."

"Well," she said good-naturedly, as she laid the steaming bowl before him, "I am a good watch-dog; I can watch my master's property as well as any policeman, and as for the foxes—they find me much too sharp for them. Never a fowl can they get from Berwen Mill." And she mumbled on while Ivor hurried through his supper, and, leaving her still clattering amongst her pans and dishes, went to bed, and quickly to sleep.

He had not slept more than an hour or so, when Acsa, as if to maintain her character of "watch-dog," thumped at his bedroom door.

"Mishteer, there's a strange light in the sky—a fire in Mwntseison, I think."

"A fire in Mwntseison!" And almost be-

fore she had spoken the words, Ivor was up, and hurrying on his clothes. "A fire in Mwntseison! Had he not dreaded it, pictured it?—was he not even dreaming of it when Acsa gave the alarm?"

While he dressed he looked out at the sky, and over the brow of the hill before him; the glow reddened and spread. He was quickly crossing the yard and climbing up the rugged path to the cliffs; and having reached the top, he ran with breathless speed towards the village, every moment nearing the crimson glow, now mixed with sparks, which illumined the sky before him.

A few hours earlier, just as Ivor was entering Mwntseison and hesitating as to where he should begin his search for Gwen, Hugh Morgan and his wife sat down to their comfortable tea together, while Madlen hovered about, or drank her tea on a bench under the chimney, helping herself from her own special tea-pot, which sat snugly in the embers on the hearth.

"There's quiet the village is, now that Gwen Owen is better," she said. "Indeed it is heaven upon earth not to hear her screaming and laughing. Lallo will be glad she didn't send her to the 'sayloom."

"Yes, poor thing," said Hugh; "I am very thankful I have been saved that horrid job. 'Twould have gone hard with me to take one of our village lasses to that big grey building at Caer Madoc. It always gives me a shudder when I

pass it, though I never had a relation there; hadst thou, Gwladys?"

"No, indeed, as far as I know, whatever; but I can't bear to see it, too, so many of our friends are there, poor things. Poor Laissabeth Davies, whose two sons were drowned together."

"And Sianco, the lobster man," said Hugh.

"Yes, and Nell who used to paddle with me; poor Nell."

"Ach y fi! yes," said Madlen from her chimney corner; "and there's two or three more from Mwntseison would be locked up there if their friends were not so quiet about them."

"Perhaps they would be better off in the 'sayloom," said Gwladys. "Indeed, I thought so to-day when I passed poor Reuben Pentraeth's window at the back of his mother's house all boarded up. It must be so dark inside, with only those chinks to let in the light. I often hear him singing when I pass."

"Yes, he doesn't lose his fine voice," said Hugh, rising; "it makes my heart ache to hear him. But I must go, merch i; I daresay I will be late coming home to-night, for I have my last accounts to make up. Everything will be finished to-night, and to-morrow Josh Howels and I will sign our names to the contract; and then good-bye to the old sail-shed for ever. Don't sit up for me, merch i. Leave the door on the latch."

"Oh, anwl! I'm afraid of Gwen, Hugh."

"No, go to bed, Mishtress," said Madlen.

"I will be up with the brewing till four o'clock, and I will let the Mishteer in."

And with a pleasant nod Hugh Morgan left the house. It requires nothing less than a death, or a parting for years, to make a Welsh husband kiss his wife before stranger eyes.

Gwladys, when she had finished her own part of the brewing, went to bed and to sleep, while Hugh sat over his accounts in the sail-shed until his candle burnt low and the last column was added up. Then, with a satisfied "There!" he pushed the book away from him, and leaning back in his chair, fell into a heavy sleep, quite unconscious that a grey, ghost-like figure hovered round and round the old sail-shed, sometimes pressing her ear to the keyhole, sometimes peering in through the tiny window of the office; making no sound on the soft turf that crept up close to the boarded walls of the shed, for she carried her wooden shoes in her hand while she watched the busy man bending over his accounts, and at last, in healthy fatigue, throwing himself back for a refreshing sleep. Yes! so heavily Hugh Morgan slept, that he did not hear the creeping footsteps outside, nor yet the crackling of burning wood around him, nor smelt the sickening fumes from burning sails and ropes, which served to deaden his oppressed senses.

When Ivor Parry, "with his breath in his throat," reached the burning building, he found the whole population of Mwntseison gathered round it, everyone eager to help, but all para-

lysed by the horror of the scene. Where was the Mishteer? he who would have been foremost in helping and directing the surging crowd; his absence took the nerve and pluck out of everybody, and the fear that he might be in the shed intensified the excitement.

Gwladys, overcome by terror, lay swooning in her mother's arms. She opened her eyes when Ivor's voice reached her ears.

"Save him, Ivor, thy friend! save him if thou lov'st me!"

Her mother, who overheard her words, looked round in affright, lest any other ear should have caught the frenzied accents.

Ivor was gone in a moment. Leaving the crowd, he passed round to the back of the shed where the little office was situated, and which the flames had not yet reached. One woman was already there. It was Mari Vone, who, in frantic excitement, dragged at the boards which formed the walls of the building. Her whole being seemed centred in the effort to break a way into the office. Ivor wasted no time in words, but joined her at once in her mad tearing at the boards, and with his additional strength, one at length gave way, and in a few seconds a hole large enough to pass through rewarded their efforts. A column of smoke rushed with such fury through the opening that, for a moment, both were thrown back. But, not to be beaten, Ivor pressed in through the blinding smoke, followed closely by Mari. They heard the shouts

and cheers of a small portion of the crowd, who had now assembled on that side of the building and watched their efforts; but there was no time for thought, for fear, or for conjecture; only one mad impulse, to search on the ground while their breath lasted. Not at the desk! not at the cupboard! Even at that moment of strained suspense the memory of a tune passed through Ivor's brain.

> "Come, flames of yellow, red, and blue,
> Help! for you are my servants true!"

Stumbling at the door, he stooped, Mari with him, and felt the Mishteer's body lying prone across the threshold. A heavy beam lay over his chest; his feet and legs were already licked by the curling flames; while his head and shoulders lay within the little office. Ivor saw or felt the situation at once, and Mari, whose busy fingers groped with his in the smoke, understood it, too. With almost superhuman strength, he lifted the heavy beam, while Mari dragged Hugh gently, but firmly, away from its crushing weight.

The density of the smoke was not quite so great on the floor as it was higher up, and to this fact Hugh Morgan hitherto owed his life. He was quickly carried to the breach in the wall, which willing hands had enlarged during the few seconds occupied in his deliverance, and, when Ivor and Mari emerged with their silent burden, a shout of joy rose from the people—a shout which quickly subsided into an awestruck silence when the straightened form lay motion-

less on the grass before them. Not a moment too soon had they made their escape, for the office was now in a blaze of swirling flames.

Quickly the news of Hugh's safety was conveyed to Gwladys.

"He's alive, Mishtress! Ivor and Mari have brought him out!"

But she did not hear them. At the words, "He's alive," the reaction from the terrible fear that had paralysed her was so great that she fainted, and in this condition was carried home.

A stretcher had been quickly improvised from an old sail, and Hugh, gently laid upon it, was also carried home by loving hands, and laid tenderly upon his own bed, Mari Vone refusing to allow anyone but Ivor and herself to lift him from the sail to the bed. He moaned once or twice during the removal, and afterwards lay still and motionless, with closed eyes.

Dr. Hughes, who, together with all the inhabitants of Abersethin, had seen the fire at Mwntseison, was quickly on the spot, and attending to Hugh Morgan, while Gwladys, white and rigid, tottered in like a ghost and flung herself down at the bedside in an abandonment of grief. The sound of her sobs reached Hugh's ears, and, opening his eyes, he tried to speak, but failed in the attempt.

"Not yet," said Dr. Hughes; "lie quite still until you are stronger. Now take this—and you, Gwladys, be quite silent if you wish to save your husband's life."

Gwladys smothered her sobs, and, sitting still and shivering beside her husband, said, in piteous accents:

"Don't send me from him! let me stay and do something."

"You can do nothing but be calm and quiet."

"I will," she said; and she kept her word.

In the early dawn of the next morning, pale and worn with the night's watching, she looked out through the low thatched window on the leaden waters of the bay, stretched out before her in the cold grey stillness of the late autumn morning. There was a pale yellow light in the eastern sky, but down on the waters of the bay the dark curtains of night had scarce yet been drawn. She shuddered as she looked at the broad expanse of even silence, unruffled by a wave, untouched by the morning's sun. "What would the day bring forth?" and she turned again to watch the quiet form upon the bed.

He had been restless with pain in the early part of the night, but for the last hour he had lain silent and still, the dark eyelashes resting upon his pale cheek, the masses of black hair lying damp and matted on the sunburnt forehead, his breathing scarcely audible. "Was it sleep? was it unconsciousness? was it *death* already creeping over him?" The anguish of the thought was too great for her over-strained nerves, and she shrank on her knees by the bedside, and, burying her face in the bedclothes, sobbed convulsively:

"Oh, not that! not that! Oh, God, not that!"

She would have given worlds for time to repair the wrong she thought she had done—to bring peace and happiness to the heart to which she had caused so much sorrow. "Was it too late? Would God listen to her prayer, and spare him yet a while? Oh, God! give me one more chance," was her continual cry.

But the wheels of life rolled on, unchecked by their course, the still form moved not, scarcely breathed, and the morning hours passed wearily on. Her mother brought her a cup of tea; Mari Vone came gently into the room, gazed a moment at the sleeper, and passed out again, leaving Gwladys to her watch alone. It was her place, and, without comment, everyone acceded to her earnest request, "Let me be with him! let me watch him!" only they hovered near within call, while Gwladys still watched on.

CHAPTER XV.

TORN SAILS.

In the village the excitement was intense, for where the sail-shed had once stood—the backbone of Mwntseison, the dispenser of the means of livelihood to so many families—there was now nothing but a smouldering heap of charred wood, surrounded by a ring of horror-stricken villagers. 'N'wncwl Jos had suggested a dreadful idea last night when Hugh Morgan was carried home and laid on his bed.

"Wasn't I right?" he said, as he stumped back to the burning building; "didn't I say 'clap her in'? and if they had done so, we should not have lost the best man that ever trod the sands of Mwntseison!"

"What! dost mean Gwen? anwl! anwl! mad as she was she wouldn't have injured the Mishteer!"

"Wel, indeed," said Dyc Pentraeth, "I was coming home late last night from Traeth Berwen, and my heart nearly jumped out of my body when I passed the sail-shed, for who should I see standing close to the wall but Gwen; she was

the same colour as the grey boards. Ach y fi! I was frightened."

"Oh, yes," said 'n'wncwl Jos, "'tis plain enough who did it—and where is she now? Nobody knows! and there is poor Lallo, druan fâch! seeking her everywhere!" And beginning to relish the part of "seer," he added, "And nobody will see Gwen again; she has run away, probably to Caer Madoc. Wel, 'twill save us the trouble of taking her there, for I'm sure I don't know how we're going to manage that now, nor anything else whatever, without the Mishteer. Oh, bobol anwl! I have lost a friend!"

"But Dr. Hughes is very clever, perhaps he will bring him through," said one of the crowd; "if not, what will become of us all, and the Mishtress, druan fâch!"

Little groups of people, with anxious and mournful faces, were gathered together here and there along the rocky road. To lose the Mishteer from their midst! the thought was unbearable! He had for so long been their guide and support—his strong will and good moral influence had been for years the moving spring of their lives, unconsciously to themselves and to him—and his death, therefore, would be a dire calamity.

"Look here, frindiau," said Josh Howels, "if we ever expect any good to come of our prayer meetings this is the time to hold one." And a murmur of approval followed his words.

"When shall it be, then?" said 'n'wncwl Jos.

"Wel! there's no time like the present," said Josh Howels; and with one accord they turned *en masse* to the door of the Methodist chapel, and filled the square building to overflowing.

In their strong poetic language they poured forth their supplications; and if sometimes the prayers uttered in their meetings had been aimless, creed-bound perorations, to-day all was reality and earnestness, though tinged by the nautical imagery ever uppermost in their minds.

"'Tis our Mishteer we are coming to Thee about, O Lord," said Josh Howels, in a voice made tremulous by suppressed feeling; "but Thou knowest that. Forgive our weak words, for we are shaken in our hearts, and blinded with our tears. Spare us the Mishteer, we beseech Thee, for without him how can we steer our frail barks across the troubled sea of life? When the storms arise, and we are tossed about in the waves, who will point us to Thee? Spare him, O Lord, for the aged pilgrims still to lean upon! so that the middle-aged may not lose his companionship, and that the children may still have his example to steer by!"

Tears and sobs filled up the pauses in the prayer.

"But if," he added, and here there was a breathless silence, "if it be not Thy will to spare him to us, if he must go, then, Lord, pilot him safely into the harbour! guide his frail bark over the dark and stormy waters! make a rift in the

clouds, O God! and give him a glimpse of the Morning Star!"

One after another they knelt and poured out their souls in prayer, with the strong craving for relief from the tension of fear and sorrow which was weighing them down, and it was three o'clock in the afternoon before the meeting broke up. Of course they could not separate without singing a hymn. And that hymn was long remembered at Mwntseison; its rising and falling cadences had never so torn their heart-strings—never hymn before had been so mingled with sobs and tears; and when it came to an end, they left the chapel in solemn silence.

In a short time they were once more gathered round the scene of the fire, and anxiously inquiring for news of the Mishteer's condition.

Suddenly there was a cry of horror from the children, for where the flames had risen highest, and the fire had burnt the fiercest, they pointed to a little heap of charred bones, which lay in the midst of the débris. They would scarcely have been recognisable as human remains but for the iron buckles of Gwen's wooden shoes which lay beside them.

"Dear God!" said the scared villagers, "who'd have thought of such a thing! 'N'wncwl Jos was right after all! Oh, vila'nes! vila'nes!" * And not even the gruesome sight before them could quite restrain their expressions of horrified

* Villain.

anger. But a silence fell upon them when Lallo appeared in their midst.

"Oh, is it true what I hear?" she cried; "that my Gwen is burnt? that she did this dreadful deed? Gwae fi * that I had taken the Mishteer's advice before it was too late! Oh, merch anwl i! my beloved daughter!" and turning with imploring hands to the crowd of bystanders, she pleaded for their forgiveness. "Don't be too angry with her. Remember my beloved child was not wise; ever since she lost her baby she wasn't wise. Oh, my Gwen! don't judge her too harshly!"

Even the strong men were touched by her sorrow, and gently led her away, while all that remained of poor Gwen was reverently gathered together.

Meanwhile, in the quiet room under the thatch, Gwladys still watched, and Mari Vone crept silently in and out, carrying down scraps of information to Ivor and 'n'wncwl Jos, who sat in the deserted kitchen, hoping for some news of improvement.

Ivor's arm was tied in a sling, for it had been badly injured in his frantic efforts to lift the heavy beam under which he had found Hugh. The flesh had been lacerated almost from wrist to elbow, yet he had felt nothing until Hugh had been carried home, and there was no more for him to do. The flames had caught his hands, too,

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* Woe is me.

and he was suffering much, in spite of Dr. Hughes' soothing dressing; but he heeded nothing—scarcely felt his pain, so intense was his anxiety.

Mari escaped without a burn. The same extraordinary Providence that had carried her through life unscathed and unmarred by the ravages of time seemed to have preserved her unhurt through the terrible experiences of the preceding night.

Ivor was struck afresh by the ethereal beauty of her appearance. She seemed lifted above the sorrow which he knew was pressing so heavily upon her. In the stress of her agony the night before he had overheard the words: "Oh, Hugh f'anwylyd!" and Ivor, so accustomed to the continual haunting void in his own heart, required no word of explanation. He knew it all, and realised with a sudden intuition the long years of crushed hopes and unselfish devotion of this woman.

At length there was a little movement on the boards above their heads, and Mari once more crept half-way up the stairs and listened, returning with a smile on her lips.

"He is better! I hear them talking quietly. Let us go and leave them together." And they went out, gently drawing the door on the latch.

Ivor went home with them, for "Dear God!" he said, "I cannot go to the mill till he is better; and, besides, I will be nearer Dr. Hughes, and for thy kind nursing."

"B'tshwr, Ivor bâch. 'Twill save me the walk over the cliffs, for I will not lose sight of thee until thy arm is well. Thou hast risked thy life for the Mishteer. Come and stretch thyself on 'n'wncwl Jos's bed." And Ivor, worn out with his exertions, did as he was bid, and lay quiet for some hours, suffering much in mind and body.

In the sick-room, while Gwladys watched, Hugh Morgan had opened his eyes naturally and calmly, as one who awakes refreshed from a long sleep. Her heart leapt for joy, but she was learning to curb her feelings.

"Art better, Hugh bâch?" she said gently.

"Yes, merch i," was the quiet answer, after which he relapsed again into silence, while with observant eyes he looked around him, seeming to ponder thoughtfully the condition of things, taking in and arranging in his mind all he saw, and all that the scene suggested to him. This at least was Gwladys' impression, and she wisely waited a few moments before speaking again.

"This has been poor Gwen's work. Isn't it so, Gwladys?"

"Yes, Hugh bâch."

"Poor soul! poor soul Thou hast gone through a bad time, merch i. Thou hast been called to bear much sorrow in thy young days."

Gwladys was crying silently.

"But thou art better now, Hugh, and the light is shining again! Oh! it will only be an ugly dream that passes away with the morning,

now that thou art better. I cannot help crying; but it is for joy, Hugh bâch, thou hast slept so long! I feared thou wouldst never awake, and now the joy is too great for me."

He smiled. "Poor little thing! druan fâch!" and again the long silence and the deep pondering.

"Now I will fetch a cup of tea, Hugh; it will refresh thee." And she called down the stairs with such joy and cheer in her voice, though in hushed tones, that Madlen knew at once what had happened, and in five minutes the news had spread through the village, "The Mishteer was better!—was talking!—was going to have a cup of tea!"

But Hugh declined the proffered cup, and thus dashed Gwladys' hopes to the ground. To refuse a cup of tea after a long night's sickness seemed to her to point to something very serious.

"No; let me be till the doctor comes," he said. "I feel pretty easy lying here; but something tells me not to move. Sit by me, f'anwylyd, and let me ask thee a few questions. Who was it saved me from that deadly furnace? I awoke choking, and tried to stagger into the shed; but at the door of the office a heavy beam fell on me. Who lifted it and carried me out? Ivor Parry, I am sure! faithful friend and true! But I thought there were two?"

"Yes, Hugh, it was Mari Vone."

"God bless her, and thou, Gwladys! Where wert thou?"

"Oh, Hugh, those terrible flames seemed to scorch my life away. I was in a faint in my mother's arms. Thou know'st of old I am a coward!"

"Poor little one, no wonder!" After another pause, he asked, "Is there anything left of the sail-shed?"

"Nothing, Hugh bâch! but don't thee speak another word, until the doctor comes."

And so he once more lay silent and motionless, until Dr. Hughes' step was heard on the stair. Gwladys hastened to meet him with a smile of gladness.

"Oh, doctor, he is much better!"

"Well, go down, Gwladys, while I look at him." And she went, wondering at the doctor's serious looks.

"Well," said Dr. Hughes, after an examination of his patient, "I am glad to find you so easy, so free from pain; but we are old friends, Hugh Morgan, and I will not deceive you. You have been seriously—h'm, h'm—caton pawb! Why do women always pull the blinds down!" And he rose and fumbled awkwardly at the blinds to hide the moisture which gathered in his eyes. "You are a brave man, Hugh Morgan, and I think I ought to tell you——"

"Don't trouble to tell me anything, doctor. There is something broken *here*, which not all your skill can mend," and he laid his strong brown hand upon the region of his heart.

"Not there, my dear fellow—on this side and lower down."

"Perhaps indeed! it doesn't matter what—if it must end my life; only tell me how long I shall live—minutes—or hours—or days?"

Dr. Hughes took the hand which still lay upon his heart, as if the pain were there, and clasping it in both his own said gently:

"A few hours! It grieves me to the heart to say this, Hugh Morgan, but I will not deceive you. I advise you not to move. Lie perfectly still and you may escape all pain."

Hugh's breast heaved with the panting breath, but he showed no other signs of distress.

"When I am gone, will you send for Mr. Lloyd the lawyer from Caer Madoc? he knows all my affairs. There will be less than I thought for Gwladys, owing to the fire; but still, thank God! there will be enough to keep her comfortably. I am sleepy."

"I will go, then," said Dr. Hughes, "and will come again." And he went softly down the stairs, to find Gwladys impatiently awaiting him.

"Oh, doctor, he will live, won't he? he is better, isn't he?"

"You must be brave, Gwladys," he answered gravely. "There is a terrible sorrow in store for you, and it depends upon how you bear it whether you make your husband's last moments peaceful or unhappy. May God strengthen you, merch i! Where is Mari Vone? she will be a comfort to you." And leaving Gwladys standing in stony

despair, he drove to Mari's cottage, and in a few words told her of Hugh's impending death.

She did not speak a word, but, turning a shade paler, she prepared at once to leave the house to comfort Gwladys.

Ivor still lay in the heavy sleep which had fallen upon him, and Dr. Hughes refused to awaken him.

"No, let him sleep while he can, and I will see him later on."

Then Mari took her way down the village road. All the sorrow and pain she had ever suffered seemed now to have reached their climax. She entered the comfortable kitchen, where Madlen sat crying on the settle.

"Oh, Mari fâch! what will we do? how can we live in this cold world without the Mishteer?"

Mari's lips were white with suppressed sorrow. She could not answer, but passed quietly up the stairs.

In the sick-room Hugh still slept on, and Gwladys, white and rigid, sat beside him. There was a silent embrace between the two women, but no sound broke the stillness except the heavy breathing of the motionless figure before them, and so the long hours passed on.

In the afternoon Dr. Hughes once more came in, but only stood looking sorrowfully down at the sleeper.

As the evening shadows drew on, for the November sun was near its setting, and the little room grew darker, Hugh began to move rest-

lessly, while Gwladys and Mari watched anxiously. Suddenly he opened his eyes, and, in the first moment of awakening, made an attempt to change his position slightly; but a look of anguish overspread his face, and a sharp cry escaped his lips, as he fell back once more into motionless silence.

Suddenly he called, "Ivor! Ivor Parry!" and quickly Ivor, who was now waiting below with Madlen, heard his own name, and hastened to the bedside.

Evidently Hugh Morgan's life was fast ebbing away.

Ivor was so overcome by the sight of his dying friend that for a few moments he could only stand speechless at the foot of the bed, until he heard again the broken voice which called him by name.

Gwladys had flung herself down by the side of the bed, and with her face buried in the bedclothes, tried to control the heavy sobs which shook her frame.

"Here I am, Hugh bâch!" said Ivor, bending over Hugh's prostrate form.

"Art there, lad? Give me thine hand. Wilt forgive me, Ivor, for all the pain I have caused thee? 'Twas done in ignorance; say thou wilt forgive me, lad. Let us part friends, as we have always lived."

"Oh, Hugh! I have nothing—nothing to forgive thee; only to be deeply grateful to thee. Thou hast filled my life with kindnesses, and

above all, with thy friendship. I have not been worthy of it, but I have never wilfully done anything to betray it."

"No," said Hugh; "we can meet on the other side with open brows—friends for ever, Ivor! Gwladys—thine hand! Lift my head a little without moving my body." And Mari, seeing that Gwladys was too overcome to move, passed her arm gently under his head.

"That will do. Now I must make haste," and placing Gwladys' hand in Ivor's, he looked at him with serious but calm eyes. "Ivor, I leave her to thee; take care of her for my sake; thou know'st now my wishes. Fforwel, Ivor! I feel my life is going. Fforwel, Gwladys, my beloved child!"

There was a long silence, only broken by the panting breath and Gwladys' sobs.

Ivor had gently laid her hand on the coverlet, and retired once more to the foot of the bed.

"Who is holding my head?"

"'Tis me, Hugh—Mari Vone. Hast one word of fforwel for me?"

"No," he said; "lean forward that I may see thy face, lass." Already his words came broken and disjointed. "Death is always a revealer, and I see everything plainly now. Mari, no fforwel to thee."

Another long silence, while the face bleached visibly, and the dark eyelashes drooped on the waxen cheek. The lips moved, and stooping over him, Mari caught the words :

"Torn sails, broken mast!" and something about "in port at last!"

Breathlessly they waited for the end, when suddenly the eyes opened wide, and in clear though low tones, Hugh Morgan's voice was heard once more.

"Mari," he said.

"I am here; close to thee, Hugh anwl."

"Come soon," and with these words his spirit took its flight.

In a few days all that was mortal of Hugh Morgan was laid to rest in the little churchyard on the hill. Gwladys had completely succumbed to her sorrow, and she lay unconscious in the delirium of fever, while her husband's funeral left the house, thus escaping all the heart-searching accessories of a Welsh burial—the muffled tread of the crowd who assemble, the peculiar mournful monotone of the prayers, and above all, the wailing, sorrowful tones of the funeral hymn. In her absence, Ivor and Mari followed as chief mourners, and never in the memory of Mwntseison had there been so large a gathering.

All that remained of poor Gwen was buried in the same little churchyard on the brow of the hill, where the sea winds swept over her grave and Hugh's alike. The seagulls flew over them both, and the harebells nodded over them, and no stranger passing by would have guessed the tragedy that connected the two graves.

Gwladys lay long under the grasp of the fierce fever; but a healthy constitution and the vigour

of youth at last conquered, and she came slowly back to consciousness and health.

Meanwhile, life in Mwntseison had returned outwardly to its usual routine, though the death of the Mishteer caused a blank in the lives of his work-people which Time was slow to fill up. But there is no one who, leaving his place vacant, is irretrievably missed; another is ready to step into his place, and the wheels of life go on with unchangeable uniformity.

Joshua Howels rebuilt the sail-shed, and once more the inhabitants of the village found their subsistence from their daily avocations there.

The loss occasioned by the fire fell upon Gwladys; but, in spite of this, Mr. Lloyd, the lawyer, was able to announce to her the possession of a small, but sufficient, competence for one in her position in life.

"His kindness reaches me still," she said. "Oh, mother, I wish I had been more worthy of it."

"Everyone knows thou hast been a good wife," said Nani, but without looking at her daughter.

She had an intuitive suspicion that the river of Gwladys and Hugh's married life had not flowed on unruffled; but she was a wise woman, and buried the knowledge, with many other secrets, in her tender heart.

Gwladys had come home to live with her once more, and Joshua Howels had married, and gone to live in the Mishteer's old house.

CHAPTER XVI.

PEACE.

Weeks and months slipped by, and when two years had passed away, the events connected with Hugh Morgan's death had been almost forgotten; only in some hearts their memory lived on, fresh and green, undimmed by the lapse of time.

At Melin Berwen, Ivor Parry's life appeared to glide on in peaceful monotony. He was an industrious and honest miller, and business flowed in apace, so that his days were fully occupied, and it was only at night, when the mill wheel was silent, and he sat alone under the big chimney, smoking or reading, that his musings led him into sad memories of the past—of the close companionship and warm friendship, which had been broken so suddenly for him and the Mishteer.

In the queer old mill kitchen, the evenings were always cosy; and Ivor Parry, like most of the peasantry, gathered much pleasure and satisfaction from the hours spent on his lonely hearth. There was always the country gossip gathered by Acsa from every stray caller at the mill, and retailed at night for his benefit, while

she clattered about her work. Although they belonged to the same class, there was a fine discrimination in her nature, generally possessed by the Welsh peasant, which forbade her sitting down at the hearth with her master, unless requested, and even ordered to do so; and then the order would be obeyed in an awkward, shamefaced manner, and at the first opportunity she would break away with some excuse of a forgotten duty.

In the course of the evening, Ivor would open the old glass bookcase which stood in the corner. It had been found there by Robert Owen when he entered the mill thirty years before, and left by him as impedimenta when Ivor took his place there. It was filled not only with account books and musty papers, but also contained the old books accumulated by two or three generations past: dog-eared, brown-leaved books of travel, of history, of biography, all of old-world interest, but which Ivor pored over with the thirst for knowledge which is so strong an element in Welsh life; and if the knowledge he gained was but crude and imperfect, still the pleasure he derived from his hour's reading was great.

The only modern intelligence that reached the old mill came in the weekly newspaper and the yearly almanac, the latter being studied in Welsh cottages with great interest.

"Are you hearing what I am saying, master?" Acsa would ask sometimes, when her rambling story had brought no response from Ivor;

and he would close his book with a bang, and return to his everyday interests, and often to his sober musings and memories of the old sail-shed, and of his careless, happy life before his ill-fated visit to Aberython. He rejoiced to think that at last Hugh knew him as he was! And then came the memory of that last scene, when Hugh had placed Gwladys' hand in his, and the fierce strong desire of his life rose unquenched within him, that "some day," when time had softened her sorrow, she would remember her husband's dying wishes. He scarcely ever went to Mwntseison—it recalled too vividly to his mind the painful scenes of Hugh's death; and when he did go, it was no further than to Mari Vone's cottage. To her he felt irresistibly drawn, and though never a word passed between them on the subject of his love for Gwladys, or of hers for Hugh, yet both felt that between them existed the link of a mutual understanding.

When the winter was over, and the earth was beginning to swell and burst with the throbbing of new life within her, even into the dusty mill the spring breezes carried suggestions of green things, Ivor began to walk in his sunny garden, which stretched along the side of the hill even to the edge of the cliffs. Here Acsa, in short petticoats and wooden shoes, was already beginning to dig the leek-bed, and in the corner, under the furze hedge, a clump of sweet violets sent up a fragrant greeting. Ivor paused and looked at them; he remembered seeing a posy of them

once in Gwladys' bodice. Why should he not take her these? He had never seen her alone since Hugh's death, had never happened to meet her on the cliff or in the village, and even on Sundays he did not see her, for she and her mother had taken to the new chapel which had lately been built on the other side of the Gwendraeth.

He gathered the violets slowly, adding green leaves, and tying them with a blade of long grass.

"Yes, spring is coming, and this is a sunny garden," observed Acsa. "We shall have a fine bed of leeks here. Caton pawb! what are you going to do with those?"

"I think, perhaps, Mari Vone would like them."

"Shouldn't wonder, indeed," said Acsa. "She's an odd woman; there's pretty she is! They say God's blessing is upon her that she never grows old; and she's thirty-seven in May—that I know, because Mary, my sister's daughter, is the same age. *She* looks old enough to be Mari Vone's mother; 'tis very strange."

Ivor pondered, as he went slowly over the cliffs, upon Mari Vone's unfading beauty. Latterly she had seemed to him fairer than ever, and even to grow younger as the days passed on. There was a light in her eyes, a happy smile on her lips, and her coils of golden hair looked more than ever like an angel's crown.

"She is beautiful, no doubt," he thought, "with a beauty that reminds one more of heaven than earth. Mari's troubles have been changed to golden blessings, I think."

She was busily laying the simple supper on the table when Ivor entered, 'n'wncwl Jos telling her one of his marvellous tales, punctuated with stumps of his wooden leg.

"Hello, Ivor! come in; just in time for supper—cawl it is, too, my boy."

"Oh, Ivor!" said Mari, coming to meet him, "there's sweet flowers. I always say it is such a shame there is no name for them—such a sweet smell!—but never mind, I love them well without a name."

"In English they call them violets," said Ivor.

"Vayolet, vayolet!—oh, it suits them well. I must share them with Gwladys." And placing them in a little mug of water, she made room for Ivor at the table.

"How's all going on at Mwntseison?" he said at last.

"Oh, just as usual," said Mari, with a smile. "Poor Lallo seems to be coming back to her cheery ways a little, though she looks much older; and Gwladys, too, is getting quite well and strong—she is busy in the garden every day now, and often she comes down to me. We like to sit together, Ivor, though we don't talk about the past—some things, thou know'st, are too sacred for words. But we understand each other,

and love to sit silent, with our knitting and our thoughts."

"Yes," was all his answer; but she knew he was grateful for her reference to Gwladys.

"Wel wyr," said 'n'wncwl Jos, as she bolted the door after his departure, "thee and Ivor are such friends, perhaps thee'lt make a match of it after all."

Mari sat down to laugh. "Oh, 'n'wncwl Jos!" she said, "will you never remember my age? I am ten years older than Ivor."

"So thou art, so thou art, merch i; but upon my dear little deed, nobody would guess it."

As the spring advanced, and the days lengthened, Mari frequently walked out over the cliffs to gather bracken for Peggi Pentraeth's donkey, sometimes going as far as the brow of the hill, from which she could look down at the old mill in the valley. At these times, Ivor, seeing her from below, would run up the sheep path to meet her, just for a word of news from Mwntseison—just in the hopes of hearing something of Gwladys. And Mari, who knew well what drew him towards her, and what lent wings to the vigorous steps with which he climbed the hill, would always reward him with some scrap of information.

"Price Merthyr preached at Tan-y-groes Chapel last night, Ivor," she said one evening, as they walked slowly over the cliff together. "Gwladys and I went to hear him. Her mother questioned us close when we came home about

the sermon; indeed, we remembered pretty well, both of us. There was the pwnc * after the sermon, and we stopped for that" (Ivor listened eagerly), "but not for the singing class, for, of course, Gwladys cannot join in that yet."

"B'd siwr!" said Ivor, with a shake of his head, for he knew, and felt himself, that to join in the singing would look like disrespect to the Mishteer's memory; "as far as that goes, 'twas a long time before I could sing myself. The first tones of my voice brought the memory of Hugh Morgan to my mind, and the singing seemed to die away."

"I cannot tell how it is," said Mari, "but I can sing. My heart seems strangely happy. It seems such a thin veil between us and Hugh, and life is so short! so very short at the utmost, it is not worth while mourning for anyone. But I must go. See those fishing boats going in? I must see if they have any fish for 'n'wncwl Jos's supper. Fforwel, Ivor!" and she waved her hand at parting.

He looked after her as her tall, graceful figure was lost to view behind the broom bushes.

"Jâr-i! she is a beautiful creature!" he thought. "How such a woman came to be born at Mwntseison I can't think!" And he trudged down the hill, whistling as he went, his thumbs in his armholes.

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* A kind of catechism in which the preacher questions the people, who all answer in monotone.

At the mill door stood a small boy who had come up over the sands from Mwntseison, the tide being low at the time.

"What is it?" said Ivor.

"'Tis Eynon Bryneithin is wanting to know, can he send his corn to be ground to-morrow? He was coming up to see you himself, but he got a hurt on his foot coming over the rocks, and there he is now sitting at 'The Ship,' and there he will be sitting till Catrine turns him out to-night. She sent me up to tell you."

"I will come back with thee and speak to him," said Ivor, "for I cannot grind his corn till Monday. There's Glasynys coming to-morrow, and Peutre-du next day," and Ivor took his way once more to the top of the cliff, accompanied by the boy.

The sun was setting in crimson and gold behind the sea; the silver crescent moon rising above the upland fields; the sea-gulls were flying homewards overhead; and the little sea-crows quarrelled and cawed as they settled down to their nests on the sides of the cliff. The sea shimmered and rippled in the gorgeous colours of the sunset, and the soft evening air was laden with the scent of the furze, which spread its golden mantle over every grassy knoll. Even the boy was struck by the beauty of the scene.

"'Tis a nice night," he said.

"Brâf!" said Ivor, drawing in a long breath of the perfumed air.

"What is that?" said the boy, pointing to

something on the side of the path, a few yards in front of them.

"'Tis a woman," said Ivor, "resting; tired, I suppose, poor thing!" But as he approached nearer his eyes took a troubled, anxious look. "Can it be Mari Vone? 'tis like her red petticoat."

The boy ran on.

"Yis, 'tis Mari Vone, asleep, I think."

And Ivor hastened up to see a sight which in all the coming years he never forgot.

Yes; 'twas Mari Vone who lay there, half reclining against the grassy hedge, her cheek resting upon her hand, her pillow a clump of harebells and wild thyme. Evidently she had thrown herself down to rest, and rest was depicted upon every feature of her face, and every curve of her figure; the white eyelids were closed, the waxen cheek was scarcely paler than usual, and on the lips was a smile of ineffable sweetness.

"There's nice she looks!" said the boy, in an awed whisper, "like an angel!"

"Yes," said Ivor, chafing her hands, "like an angel as she is. Go, run to the village and bring somebody here, and a sail to carry her."

For there was no doubt about it, Mari Vone was dead. The heart had ceased to beat, and though she was still warm, and the fingers which Ivor rubbed and pressed were pliant as his own, he never doubted the fact; he knew that that gentle spirit had quitted the beautiful tenement in which it had lived for thirty-seven years; he knew

that he should never more see it look out of those deep blue eyes, never hear it speak with that tongue now silent, and a flood of sorrow filled his heart. He sat beside her while the sun sank below the horizon; the grassy pillow upon which she lay shone with the burnished gold of its last rays, which threw also with its last kiss a rosy flush over Mari's face. Ivor gazed at her with something of the awe which the boy had felt.

"Was it possible that this was death?"

The sea sighed and whispered on the shore below, the evening breeze lifted the little stray curls of her golden hair. A thrush in a thorn-bush near sang its last song to the sinking sun; the flowers seemed to send up a stronger perfume as they bent and trembled in the sea-breeze; the clouds of gold and copper speckled the pale blue sky; everything in earth, sea, and sky seemed to speak of beauty and love, and in the next silent half-hour Ivor realised more vividly the nearness of things unseen than in his work-a-day life he had ever done before.

When help came at last, he felt almost a pang of regret at being robbed of that lovely form, in whose presence he had experienced such a vision of peace and beauty. With hushed voices and silent tread the villagers approached, and with awe struck faces gazed at the silent form on the green sward.

"There's beautiful—she's smiling!" said one.

"She has reason to smile, I expect," said

Joshua Howels, preparing to tenderly lift her, and place her in the improvised stretcher brought from the sail-shed. "'Tis the same sail that carried Hugh Morgan," he said; and solemnly and slowly they carried their light burden to her home.

"There's pity! poor 'n'wncwl Jos and Gwladys Morgan are gone to Caer Madoc!" whispered one.

"Wel, indeed, there's sad news for them, whatever!"

"I hope she will alter before the funeral," said a sturdy sailor, who had helped to carry her in. "We won't like to bury her looking like that!" And the villagers crowded round to look at the familiar face, whose strange unearthly beauty struck even the children as something unusual.

Lallo and Nani Price attended to the arrangements of the death chamber, allowing themselves to be persuaded by Ivor to leave on the body of his friend the clothes in which she died, instead of arraying her in the grandeur of a Sunday gown and the best clothes which she possessed. They were rather scandalised, and gave way only upon Ivor's pointing out to them how speckless and fresh they looked—how snowy the kerchief crossed on her bosom!—how beautiful the crown of golden hair!—how pretty the dainty, shiny shoes! "You could never make her look better!"

"That's true, indeed, whatever," said Nani Price; "and, after all, Mari Vone was different to anybody else."

"Caton pawb! yes," said Lallo; "never a speck nor a smot upon her! But *I* would be sorry to be buried in anything but the clothes I go to meeting in, or a decent shroud."

"Well," said Nani, closing the door softly, as they all left the room together, "Mwntseison will be no better than any other village, now that Mari Vone and Hugh Morgan have left it! Ivor Parry, wilt go and meet 'n'wncwl Jos and Gwladys and break the news to them?"

"No," he said. "Go you, Nani fâch; it will come better from a tender woman than a hard man like me. I will go to Dr. Hughes. There must be a 'quest, I suppose."

In less than a week Mari Vone was laid to rest in the little wind-swept churchyard on the hill; and none of the villagers seemed surprised when Gwladys expressed a wish that her grave should be dug close beside the Mishteer's. Their hearts had been too deeply moved for gossip, and they seemed to have been impressed with the reality of something beyond and behind the fleeting scenes of life.

Later on, a simple white cross stood between their graves with the words:

"In memory of Hugh Morgan (The Mishteer), who died November 18th, 18—, aged 45. And of his friend, Mari Vaughan, who died May 1st, 18—, aged 37.

"They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MILL IN THE MOONLIGHT.

"Little I know of life
By worldly joys begot,
But the rapture well I know
That dwells in a mountain cot;
The glory that comes at eve,
As I sit 'neath the elder tree,
And watch the crimson sun
Sink down behind the sea."

—*Ceiriog.*

ANOTHER year had passed over the simple village, whose history we have hitherto followed, unmarked by anything more than the ordinary events of daily life. A golden harvest had been gathered on the uplands, and the herring fishing had been unprecedentedly plentiful. The work at the sail-shed was once more in full swing, and Mwntseison was peaceful and contented.

Over the cottage fires in the evening, when the peat burnt brightly, and the "uwd" simmered in the iron crock, the events connected with the Mishteer's and Mari Vone's deaths were frequently the subjects of conversation; but Gwladys' connection with them seemed gradually

forgotten. She was amongst them still, and had dropped so naturally into her old place of Nani Price's daughter that her marriage was seldom called to mind. She was well content that it should be so, for into the even flow of her innocent life it had only brought a sorrowful "troubling of the waters," from the memory of which she shrank with a self-upbraiding regret, and she never by word or deed alluded to the past.

Her simple, guileless nature was already throwing off the clouds that had darkened her life; a tide of youthful vigour and joy ran full in her veins; Nature asserted her right to be happy, and she seemed to grow in beauty as the days sped on. True, a pensive look often crossed her face, but it rather added to, than detracted from, the charm of her expression. She gradually took up all her old habits—tossing the hay in the hay-fields; binding the sheaves in the cornfields; singing at her work in the garden; and still carrying her creel to the beds of laver, to the great relief of Nance Owen, who grew more infirm with advancing years.

"There's good she is to me, calon fâch!"* she would say. "As isel † as ever! You would never guess she had money in the bank."

Indeed, "the money in the bank" was little more than a myth to Gwladys. Mr. Lloyd, the lawyer, looked after her affairs with great interest, and the respect which every Welshman feels for

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* Dear heart. † Without pride.

those who will not touch their capital. He sent Gwladys her dividends regularly; but the blue envelope which brought them was always an anxious mystery to the simple girl, and its receipt was invariably followed by a journey to Caer Madoc in Peggi Pentraeth's donkey-cart, where, having deposited the money in the bank, she and her mother returned with lightened hearts, feeling very rich with a few sovereigns in their pockets. 'N'wncwl Jos generally drove them on these occasions, managing to receive his "pinshwn" on the same day. The journey was always kept a dead secret beforehand, for "who knew but that a donkey-cart bearing two such wealthy people as Gwladys and 'n'wncwl Jos might not be waylaid, and its occupants robbed on the road."

Not that any inhabitant of the village would do such a thing! but stray sailors from far-off ports *did* sometimes find their way to Mwntseison, and English tramps often passed through in their wanderings.

'N'wncwl Jos had found a comfortable resting-place for his latter years, for Lallo had come forward with kindly offers of hospitality.

"Come and live with me and Siencyn," she had said, when on his return from Mari's funeral, the old man had begun to look mournfully around him. "Thou wilt be company for Siencyn when he comes home, and when he is away thou canst help me with that andras of a pig, for he wants a firm hand over him."

"Oh, he'll get that," said 'n'wncwl Jos, "if I come to live with you; and a firm leg, too, if he doesn't behave."

And so it was settled, and Lallo found something to occupy her time and thoughts; and the old man, though he lost much of his jocularity, regained by degrees his old cheerfulness, and spent much of his time with Nani Price and Gwladys. He was always a welcome guest, not only because of his connection with Mari, but that sometimes he rowed up to Traeth Berwen, and stumped up as far as the old mill to see Ivor Parry.

"Jâr-i! Ivor is getting on," he said one evening, while Gwladys, at her work, listened with fluttering heart. "He's getting a reg'lar jolly miller; and there's beautiful cwrw Acsa brews! without my secret, too. But his heart is at Mwntseison still, though so many friends are gone from here. There's questions he asks me. 'How is Josh Howels?' he sez. 'And how is Nani Price and her daughter?'

"'Oh, quite well,' sez I; 'and Gwladys is as ugly as ever.'"

Gwladys smiled pensively.

"'How is it you never come up to see us at Mwntseison?' sez I; and he didn't answer, but looked up after the smoke to the chimney."

A few evenings after this conversation Gwladys took her way over the cliffs which stretched at the back of the sail-shed towards the valley of the Berwen. She was bent on the same

kindly errand that had frequently taken Mari Vone on this path, namely, to gather ferns for Peggi Pentraeth's donkey. She never went more than half-way to Traeth Berwen, partly shrinking from passing the grassy mound on which her friend had breathed her last, alone and unattended, and, moreover, a little proud reserve withheld her footsteps.

If she went further than half-way, Berwen mill would be in sight, and perhaps she might be seen from the mill. Not for worlds will a well-brought-up Welsh girl give her lover a shadow of reason to think that *she* is seeking *him*. She is not slow to respond to advances on his part, but will never make any of her own. So she turned down a cleft in the cliffs, and gathered her baich * of green and golden bracken, and, tying it into shape with a strong cord, sat down upon it for a moment to watch the setting sun before she slung it on her back.

Behind her the rounded hills rose brown and flushed in the sunset light; around her the rushes whispered in the evening breeze, the green sward glowed in the sun's last rays, and every nodding flower caught its crimson light. The sea murmured on the rocks below, the floating sea-gulls still rose and fell on the heaving waters, and though it was late autumn, a calm, serene beauty brooded over land and sea, as though summer had returned with a last lingering good-

* Bundle.

bye. Gwladys sat and watched the fading tints, filled with tender memories of the past, not unmixed with an awakening flood of hope in the future; not untinged, too, with a feeling of resentment against Ivor, who had been very chary of his visits to Mwntseison of late. She had been thankful to him at first for his avoidance of her; it spared her so much embarrassment. But latterly, the longing to see him again had grown upon her, and the old haunting hunger for his love was again rising within her—not that it had ever died, nor even slept, but that it had been repressed and buried under the sad events through which she had passed. But now she was evidently loosening the bonds which had kept it in check, for it rose again within her, and threatened once more to flow in upon her in waves of unrest. True, she had sometimes met her old lover on the way to and from chapel, or market, or fair, but never alone, and always Ivor had been calm and undemonstrative.

"Had he forgotten her?" she wondered. "Had the years brought him submission and indifference. She was still so young—only twenty-three. It was no wonder if that pensive curve of the lips and that moisture in the brown eyes betokened a little wistful rebelling against fate. Why! why should she not be happy? Why did Ivor so persistently avoid her?" and so lost was she in her own thoughts, that she did not hear a footstep which passed along the path above her.

It was Ivor Parry, sauntering up from the mill with the intention of paying one of his infrequent visits to Mwntseison. He had longed latterly more and more for a sight of Gwladys, and he chafed under the restraints which he had placed upon himself, and the proprieties of village life which kept them apart.

But surely here she was close beside him! every barrier removed from his path! no moral restraint to be fought with as of old! nothing to prevent their intercourse! The suddenness and greatness of the thought took his breath away, and though, with a man's impetuosity, he never hesitated to grasp the opportunity, still the strong man trembled as he approached the unconscious girl.

"Gwladys!" he said at last, and in a moment she had started to her feet, the rich blood surging over neck, cheek, and brow.

"Ivor!" was all her answer.

And then, with the ridiculous combination of the commonplace and the romantic, their first embarrassed words were the usual remarks upon the weather.

"'Tis tewi brâf!" said Gwladys, who was the first to recover self-possession.

"Brâf, indeed!" said Ivor. "Wilt not sit down again?"

But she hesitated.

"Come!" he said, arranging the bundle of fern; "and will I sit by thy side?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Gwladys, looking round, as if for inspiration.

"Yes," said Ivor, laughing at her embarrassment; "look round at earth, sea, and sky, and see if thou canst find a reason why I should not sit on this bank beside thee?"

"Well, indeed, I suppose there isn't one whatever," she answered, laughing, and sitting down on the furze again, while Ivor stretched himself on the grass beside her.

Both felt the enchantment of the hour, and both endeavoured to relieve the tension by falling into a commonplace remark.

But what was the matter with the sea to-night? that in every pause of the conversation it sent up whisperings and murmurings, that bore in their tones such personal suggestions to both Ivor and Gwladys!

They could distinctly hear the dash of the waves on Traeth-y-daran, and in both their hearts arose the memory of the night they had spent together there.

A bright star followed in the wake of the sun, and though Ivor only said, "'Tis a fair sunset, and promises another fine day," to which she smilingly assented, yet in the hearts of both arose the memory of the star whose setting they had watched together.

Yes, though not a word of love was spoken between them, for Ivor still feared to startle his companion by a too sudden change of manner, still both felt that the barriers were down, that

the cold wall of separation was broken, and that once more the tide of love was flowing full towards them.

At last, when the evening breeze grew colder, and warned them they must part, there came a louder swish from the waves below, and Gwladys, with drooping eyes, said:

"I don't forget what thou didst for me in the storm down there, Ivor. I have never thanked thee, oh, no! but it is all here," and she laid her hand on her heart.

"There is no need, lass. Between me and thee there is no need for words, we have gone through too many bitter things together not to understand each other now."

"Yes, indeed!" was all her answer; and, with great relief, from that hour she put away from her all that was bitter in the memory of the past, and began to make room in her soul for the flowers of hope that were springing up within her.

"Well, good-night, lass. I have had a happy hour—and thou?"

"Well, yes, I suppose indeed," was all she answered; but it was accompanied with such a happy smile that Ivor seemed quite content, and astonished Acsa by entering the mill yard with a merry song on his lips.

This night's meeting was the prelude to many more on the cliffs, on the shore, or on the bay, and when the winter came in real earnest, Ivor's visits to Mwntseison were of very frequent occurrence.

One evening in the early spring he walked again in the mill garden, and sought and found under the furze hedge a bunch of sweet violets, which he gathered before he took his way up the side of the hill to meet Gwladys.

"Vayolettes! vayolettes!" he thought. "Mari Vone was right, the name does suit them." And as Gwladys pinned them into her bodice, he was reminded of the sea-pinks which he had snatched from the table while 'n'wncwl Jos lay ill in his bed, and which he still treasured between the pages of one of the old brown books in the mill bookcase.

He would have told her of the incident had not a tender regard for Hugh's memory made him hestitate to speak of anything which should contrast their present freedom with the restraint of their former meetings.

Backwards and forwards over the velvet turf at the top of the cliffs they roamed together, the hours passing by unheeded, until, as they reached the green mound, now lying bathed in the silver moonlight, which they had named "Mari's pillow," Gwladys said:

"I must not go further, or my mother will be bolting the door."

"Wilt not come to the brow of the hill, 'tis only a little further, and I have something to show thee there."

And she made no demur, but continued her walk to the edge of the hill, which sloped down to the valley of the Berwen. The little river

gurgled and whispered in the moonlight, as it ran below them on its way to the sea.

"We can hear the Berwen from here," said Gwladys; "but what hast to show me, Ivor?"

"Only the mill!" said he, pointing across the valley to where the old mill stood by the noisy little stream.

It was a picture of rural beauty as it stood there, like a grey sentinel at the opening of the valley. Landwards, the cwm gradually closed in, where the thick woods grew down to the water's edge; between them the old church, the home of the white owls, which made the glen their hunting ground, was dimly visible through the haze, the mill itself showing clear and sharp, with its silvered points and dark shadows, its ivy-covered gables well defined in the moonlight. There was a firelight glow in the broad kitchen window, and the smoke curled up from the grey stone chimney.

"Only the mill!" said Ivor again.

"Yes, there's pretty it is in the moonlight! and there's nice things the river is saying down there!"

"Yes, 'tis a pretty home; but lonely, lass—lonely for me; wilt not come and brighten it, Gwladys? Think how long I have waited; think how much I have suffered—and thee, too! Come, Gwladys, come to the mill with me! Come, f'anwylyd, I have not hurried thee; but every week has seemed a month lately and every month a year! Is there any reason in earth or

heaven why we should not be married now? Why art so silent, Gwladys?"

"Only, Ivor, I am wondering can it be that there is so much happiness in store for me and thee?"

"Yes," said Ivor, in a loud, determined tone, "there is love and happiness in store for us, if thou wilt only give thyself to me. Come and be the mistress of the old mill, f'anwylyd; come and be the queen and idol of my heart, as thou hast always been! When will we be married? To-morrow?"

"Caton pawb, Ivor, thou art taking my breath away."

"Next week, then?"

"Well, indeed, it will only be on one condition," and she held up her finger playfully.

"Oh, listen to her," said Ivor delightedly, "she's beginning to lay down the law already; and what conditions does my queen enforce?" and taking off his hat he made her a sweeping bow.

"Well, 'tis this," said Gwladys; "there must be no wedding—I mean—only thee and me, Ivor."

"What! not the parson?"

"Oh, of course, fwlcyn dwl; but no one else."

"Agreed!" said Ivor.

"And no one at Mwntseison must know about it, only mother."

"Agreed!" said Ivor again. "And why

must we have no one at our wedding, f'anwyl?"

"There will be two there indeed, I think," she said, the merry dimples giving place to a more serious, though happy smile.

Ivor looked at her for a moment inquiringly.

"Dost mean Hugh and Mari Vone?"

She nodded.

"'Tis a beautiful thought indeed, lass; and why not? and thou art right, Gwladys, 'twould be hard indeed to find fit company for them."

And so it was settled between them; and in the old mill by the Berwen, Ivor and Gwladys found in the long years to come that happiness, so long delayed and waited for, is sometimes found even on earth!

THE END.

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